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General Assembly

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New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of the late Paramount Leader of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Mr. Deng Xiaoping

Tribute to the memory of the late President of the Republic of Guyana, His Excellency Mr. Cheddi Jagan

The President: Before we begin our consideration of the items on the agenda for this morning, I should first like to invite the General Assembly to pay tribute to the memory of the late Paramount Leader of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Mr. Deng Xiaoping, whose passing on 19 February 1997 is a loss not only to China but to the international community as well.

With his vision of reform and pragmatism, Mr. Deng will be remembered as an astute leader who stayed China's course towards international peace and security during a time of global transition. He will also be remembered for his unparalleled contributions as the chief architect of modernization, liberalization and economic prosperity in China.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the Permanent Representative of China to convey our heartfelt condolences and profound sympathy to the Government and the people of China and to the bereaved family.

The Assembly will also pay tribute to the memory of the late President of the Republic of Guyana, His Excellency Mr. Cheddi Jagan.

A favourite son of Guyana and an esteemed statesman, Mr. Jagan distinguished himself as a tireless champion of democracy at home and as a staunch supporter of the ideals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I should like to convey our heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of Guyana and to the bereaved family.

I now invite representatives to stand and to observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memories of the late Paramount Leader of the People's Republic of China and of the late President of the Republic of Guyana.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: I call on the representative of Egypt, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): In behalf of the Group of African States here in New York, I wish to express the Group's sincere condolences to the people and Government of the People's Republic of China upon the death of their leader Mr. Deng Xiaoping.

With his passing, China has lost an important living symbol and leader who planned the emergence of China as a Power on the international scene. The world has lost an epoch-making international figure. Mr. Deng Xiaoping

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was indeed worthy of the respect and admiration of the international community for his key role in promoting China's resurgence in every field.

China has stood by the African States and is linked to us by bonds of true friendship and productive economic cooperation. I am convinced that China, given its relations with and particular interest in Africa, will pursue this policy of cooperation under its new leadership, to the benefit of both populations.

Mr. Deng Xiaoping was active in his country's politics for the past 50 years. At its helm for the past 18 years, he participated in the planning and implementation of China's policies. He has left a clear and indelible stamp on the political, economic and social life of China that will endure through the ages. China and the entire world will recall with admiration his wise guidance and service.

On behalf of the African Group, I wish to convey our sincere condolences to the delegation of China.

In my capacity as Chairman of the African Group, I also wish to extend our sincere condolences to the people, Government and delegation of the Republic of Guyana on the death of Mr. Cheddi Jagan. He served his country and people throughout his life and earned respect nationally and internationally.

On behalf of the African States, I also wish to convey our deep condolences to the Government and people of Jamaica on the occasion of the death of their former Prime Minister, Mr. Michael Manley, who led his country and enjoyed national and international standing.

The President: I call on the representative of Oman, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Al-Khussaiby (Oman): On behalf of the Group of Asian States, I have the distinct honour and privilege to join the members of this Assembly in paying special tributes to the memory of the late leader of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Mr. Deng Xiaoping, and to the memory of the late President of the Republic of Guyana, His Excellency Mr. Cheddi Jagan.

I am indeed grateful to be accorded this solemn opportunity to convey collective sentiments of heartfelt condolence from the States members of the Asian Group to the bereaved families of His Excellency Mr. Deng Xiaoping and His Excellency Mr. Cheddi Jagan in their grief and to all the people of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Guyana on their great loss.

We recognize that the passing away of His Excellency Mr. Deng Xiaoping is an immeasurable loss to the People's Republic of China and a tremendous source of grief to the Chinese people. To the international community, he was well known as the Paramount Leader who made historic contributions that have a vital bearing on the future and fate of his people and his country.

Guided by his theories, China's economy has made unprecedented achievements over the past years. His people's living standards have greatly improved and his country's outlook has undergone profound changes, winning wholehearted support from his people. Mr. Deng paid close attention to reforms, opening a modernization drive with a high sense of historic responsibility.

To people of the world from all walks of life, His Excellency Mr. Deng was regarded as the founder of the new China and the bearer of the key that opened the doors of the great walls of China to the entire world. His unprecedented move laid down an epochal milestone in the annals of history and received worldwide accolades and acknowledgment.

We are equally anguished and feel a great sense of loss over the demise of His Excellency Mr. Cheddi Jagan, the late President of the Republic of Guyana, who led the Government since his second accession to office in 1992 after the first free and fair elections in post-independent Guyana.

He was well known to the friendly people of Guyana as a man of the people, which in itself says a lot about him. President Jagan has bequeathed to his nation a legacy of commitment to the upliftment of the working people, the poor and the disadvantaged. In 50 years of public life, he displayed confidence, courage and commitment in his lifelong crusade against poverty.

Mr. Jagan's contribution to the struggle against colonialism and for independence transcended Guyana's borders and has been a staple feature of the Guyanese and Caribbean political process for the past five decades. With Guyana as an active member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), he became its Chairman during the last years of his life. At the recent CARICOM conference of Heads of Government in Antigua and Barbuda, it was noted that Mr. Jagan's contribution to global economic issues and his commitment to the

region's development were deeply appreciated by all of his colleagues within CARICOM. Furthermore, his most recent mission was the promotion of a new global human order.

We join the rest of Guyana and people everywhere in mourning the passing away of Guyana's greatest patriot and statesman.

In remembering these two great leaders of our times, the Group of Asian States invites everyone to join together and encourage the people of the People's Republic of China and of the Republic of Guyana to turn their grief into strength, carry forward their leaders' visions and express their mourning through concrete actions towards the achievement of democracy, peace and prosperity. May Almighty God rest their souls in eternal peace.

The President: I call on the representative of the Republic of Moldova, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Ciobanu (Republic of Moldova): On behalf of the Eastern European States, I wish to express our profound sorrow on the death of the senior statesman of China, Mr. Deng Xiaoping.

Over the past two decades, Mr. Deng Xiaoping was an extraordinary figure on the world stage, a great leader and an illustrious son of the Chinese people. He was the driving force behind China's unprecedented modernization and dramatic economic development. He made a monumental contribution to China's well-being and placed it in the ranks of the major countries of the world.

Mr. Deng Xiaoping's life spanned a century of turmoil, tribulation and remarkable change in China. He spurred China's historic economic reform programme, which greatly improved living standards in China and modernized much of the nation.

But not only China benefited from his leadership; the world at large gained from his effort to emphasize peace and development.

China today plays an important role in world affairs, in no small part because of Mr. Deng Xiaoping's determination to open his country to the world and his fight for peaceful and principled relations between States. He will always be remembered by the international community as a paramount personality who stamped his indelible mark on the twentieth century.

I wish to convey, on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, our sincere condolences to the bereaved family and to the Government and the people of China for this tragic loss.

Again on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I wish to join previous speakers in expressing our deep sadness over the passing of Mr. Cheddi Jagan, President of the Republic of Guyana.

President Jagan was a man of high stature, widely known for his frankness, dedication, determination and integrity, an exemplary figure for the people of the Republic of Guyana and a distinguished citizen of the world.

He left his nation a valuable legacy of commitment to the service of the common people and to tireless efforts in the fight for freedom, as well as in the fight for prosperity for his own compatriots and all the world's poor. He was a brave fighter against any form of domination and exploitation at the international level.

We inherit the late President Jagan's immense intellectual contribution on global economic issues. His vision went beyond the borders of his country, of the Caribbean region and of the southern hemisphere. Indeed, his pursuit of a new global human order won him our respect and admiration.

We are deeply saddened to bid farewell to President Cheddi Jagan. The memory of his work and ideas in the service of his people and of the international community will stay with us.

I wish to convey to his bereaved family and friends and to the people of Guyana our heartfelt condolences for a loss we all regret.

The President: I call on the representative of Paraguay, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Díaz-Pereira (Paraguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In this commemorative ceremony, we wish to remember with deepest respect two illustrious public servants who brought honour to their countries: His Excellency Mr. Deng Xiaoping, a very important leader of the People's Republic of China, and His Excellency Mr. Cheddi Jagan, President of the Republic of Guyana.

These two statesmen came from countries with pronounced differences in terms of population and size. However, their lives and their work are perfectly parallel to each other, as each fruitfully devoted a large part of his life to the task of governing.

The legacy of these two men has had a considerable effect on the course of modern history in their respective countries. They belonged to a generation that experienced great conflicts and then became an important factor for change in the contemporary world.

Transcending borders, the work of these men has been incorporated into the grand project in which we are all engaged: making this planet a more and more secure place for humankind. The fruits of their efforts are already in evidence, making it possible for us to look ahead with hope and optimism to a new century of peace and development for the entire human race.

I have the honour, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, which my country is chairing for the month of March, to pay tribute to the memory of Mr. Deng Xiaoping and Mr. Cheddi B. Jagan for the great importance of their contributions.

Finally, our Group wishes to take this opportunity also to remember an illustrious son of Jamaica who recently passed away, The Honourable Michael Manley, former Prime Minister of that country.

The President: I call on the representative of Finland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Breitenstein (Finland): It is with profound sadness that, on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, I pay tribute to the memory of two outstanding leaders: the Paramount Leader of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Mr. Deng Xiaoping, and His Excellency Mr. Cheddi Jagan, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

Our delegations deeply regret the death of Mr. Deng Xiaoping. He will be remembered as an exceptional political leader and statesman.

The last 20 years in China have been the era of Mr. Deng Xiaoping. Mr. Deng contributed greatly to China's development. He steered China firmly on the course of economic reform. During the reform period of nearly 20 years, China's economy increased more than tenfold, and the living standard of both rural and urban citizens improved significantly.

Mr. Deng's role was instrumental in the opening of China to the outside world. Similarly, he was the main architect of the "one country, two systems" policy. Characteristic of his modesty and critical mind is the remark he once made when speaking of his own achievements:

> "I would be quite content if the ratio between my achievements and mistakes were evaluated to be 50-50."

History will undoubtedly pass fair judgement on him. But for us here today it is already clear that the legacy of Deng Xiaoping in China is a lasting one.

Mr. Cheddi Jagan's career as a political leader lasted half a century. He led his country to independence and served as President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana from October 1992 until his untimely demise. Mr. Jagan was also an active trade union leader. In addition, he was an avid writer, as is evidenced by his many books and papers on Guyana's path as a nation as well as on the role of the Caribbean as a whole in the international arena. Mr. Jagan's accomplishments are lasting and will be remembered.

I would like to conclude by expressing my Group's sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Deng Xiaoping and to the people of the People's Republic of China, as well as to the family of Mr. Cheddi Jagan and the people of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. I would also like to take this opportunity to express on behalf of my Group our sincere condolences to the delegation of Jamaica and to the people of Jamaica on the untimely death of their former Prime Minister, Mr. Michael Manley.

The President: I call on the representative of the United States of America.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): As the representative of the host country, I wish to express my Government's deepest sympathy on the passing of three distinguished world leaders — President Cheddi Jagan of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, Mr. Deng Xiaoping of the People's Republic of China and Mr. Michael Manley, former Prime Minister of Jamaica — and pay tribute to them for their remarkable lives.

President Cheddi Jagan played a dominant role in Guyana's life and politics for more than 45 years. He was a founder of the People's Progressive Party, which led Guyana's struggle for independence. He was truly an international personality and leader who never forgot his people or his obligations to care for the poor of his own country and for the poor of other countries. He was a humanist who sought a variety of political solutions to the problems of economic distribution.

To the very end, President Jagan was a man of strong ideals and principles with a creative vision for a better world and a better life for his people and his beloved Guyana. The people of Guyana have lost a respected President, and the world has lost a champion of the poor. As President Clinton noted last week, President Jagan was a man whose great dignity, courage and leadership will long be remembered. Guyana has lost a distinguished statesman, and the United States has lost a good friend.

As President Clinton said, Mr. Deng was an extraordinary figure on the world stage. Mr. Deng spurred China's historic economic reform programme and opened his country to the outside world. His historic visit to our country in 1979 laid the foundation for the rapid expansion of relations and cooperation between China and the United States. We offer our condolences to his family and the Chinese people. He will be missed.

Let me also take this opportunity to convey to the representative of Jamaica and the people of Jamaica my deepest sympathy on the death of former Prime Minister Michael Manley. Mr. Manley was a distinguished leader who brought Jamaica through difficult changes towards a better future. Not only did he devote his life to the public service of his nation, but he endeavoured to promote development and prosperity for the rest of the developing world. Mr. Manley's life and career were marked by his deep compassion for the world's less fortunate and his great love for his people and for Jamaica. As we mourn his passing, we take comfort in the legacy of patriotism, dedication and devotion to democracy that Mr. Manley left behind.

The President: I call on the representative of China.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Mr. Deng Xiaoping, deeply loved by Chinese people of all ethnic groups, passed away in Beijing on 19 February 1997.

Mr. Deng Xiaoping was an outstanding leader, enjoying the high esteem of the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese People's Liberation Army and Chinese people of all ethnic groups. He was the chief architect of the reform, opening and modernization of China. He was the founder of the theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The passing of Mr. Deng Xiaoping is an immeasurable loss to Chinese people of all ethnic groups.

The great and glorious life of Mr. Deng Xiaoping was closely linked with the liberation, development and revitalization of the Chinese nation. Mr. Deng Xiaoping, at the core of China's second generation of central collective leadership, demonstrated extraordinary courage and resourcefulness at critical moments of China's development. He made major decisions to establish economic development as the central task and reform and opening as fundamental State policy. Since then, China has undergone a great historical process encompassing rural and urban reform, economic restructuring and restructuring in all other fields, invigoration of the domestic economy and opening up to the outside world. In this process, China's national economy has developed rapidly, the nation as a whole has grown ever stronger, the people have gradually become better off and the country's outlook has undergone profound changes. All this has won the hearty support of the people.

Mr. Deng Xiaoping once said that without Mao Zedong, the Chinese people would have had to grope in the dark for a longer period of time. Likewise, we should say today that without Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese people would not be able to live the new life they live today and would not have today's reforms, opening and bright prospects of modernization.

The complete reunification of China is the common aspiration of the entire Chinese nation, and the idea of achieving it peacefully as "one country, two systems" was a great contribution of Mr. Deng Xiaoping. The concept of "one country, two systems" has provided a fundamental guarantee for the gradual achievement of China's reunification.

Observing scientifically the changes in the international situation, Mr. Deng Xiaoping led us in the reshaping of an international strategy adhering to an independent foreign policy of peace, safeguarding world peace, promoting world development and opposing hegemonism and power politics, thus opening up a new situation in China's relations with foreign countries in a

new era, and making historic contributions to developing and strengthening China's friendly relations with all countries in the world on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence. It was in this very forum, in 1974, that he put forward, on behalf of the Chinese Government, the proposal to establish a new international economic order.

Mr. Deng Xiaoping proved himself to be a great son of the Chinese people. He deeply loved his motherland and his people, and was deeply loved and respected by the Chinese people. The central collective leadership, with President Jiang Zemin at its core, will lead the Chinese people in carrying forward the behest of Mr. Deng Xiaoping, advancing the great cause pioneered by him: building China into a prosperous, democratic and civilized socialist country, and developing friendly relations of cooperation with all countries in the world, thus making more, and greater, contributions to peace, development and the progress of mankind.

At today's meeting, the President of the General Assembly, the Chairmen of regional groups and the representative of the host country have expressed their condolences on the passing of Mr. Deng Xiaoping. I wish to express, in the name of the Chinese delegation, my heartfelt thanks to the President of the General Assembly, the Chairmen of regional groups and the representative of the host country. I will convey these condolences and sincere sentiments to the Chinese Government, the Chinese people, and the family of Mr. Deng Xiaoping.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express our condolences on the passing of President Cheddi Jagan of Guyana and of former Prime Minister Michael Manley of Jamaica. I would like to ask the Permanent Representatives of Guyana and of Jamaica respectively to convey to the Governments of Guyana and of Jamaica and to the families of President Jagan and Prime Minister Manley our deepest condolences.

The President: I call now on the representative of Guyana.

Ms. Cornette (Guyana): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, and other members of the General Assembly for the moving tributes paid to the memory of Mr. Cheddi Jagan, late President of the Republic of Guyana, who passed away on 6 March 1997 after a brief illness. It is with a deep sense of humility and gratitude that I accept these tributes on behalf of the Government and the people of Guyana, the bereaved family of Mr. Jagan and Guyana's delegation to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

The passing of Mr. Jagan marks the end of an era in Guyana. Born on 22 March 1918 in humble circumstances, Mr. Jagan gave his life to service to Guyana and reached the highest office in his beloved country. After studying abroad and being trained professionally as a dentist, Mr. Jagan returned home to a call to serve his country in the political arena. This he did with courage, dedication and great distinction. For more than 50 of his 78 years he gave dedicated and selfless service to the Guyanese people. During that time, he remained a key actor in the political struggle in Guyana for democracy, development and social justice, persevering in spite of many obstacles both at home and abroad.

Mr. Jagan was the founder of the modern political movement in Guyana. A Political Affairs Committee formed by him in 1946, in partnership with others, led to the founding in 1950 of the People's Progressive Party, Guyana's first mass-based political party. From that platform, Mr. Jagan spearheaded Guyana's struggle first for universal adult suffrage then for self-government and eventual independence from colonial rule. In 1953, he was elected the first Premier of the then British Guiana but was removed from office a mere 133 days later for holding a political outlook contrary to that of the colonial authorities at the time. Mr. Jagan was, however, to return to win successive elections in 1957 and 1961.

The enthusiasm and tirelessness with which President Jagan pursued his goals were outstanding. His commitment to the upliftment of the Guyanese people remained steadfast. He demonstrated enormous passion for the improvement of the human condition in all parts of the globe. By the same token, he pushed for reforms in social development at home: in housing, health and education. In education, a singular achievement of Premier Jagan's administration was the establishment in 1963 of the University of Guyana, Guyana's sole university. His early activism on behalf of labour did not desert him on assumption of political office. He worked for the enactment of labour laws that would protect workers' rights and improve their working conditions. Even though he did not lead the country into independence in 1966, our attainment of that status was due in large measure to his earlier efforts which awakened the political consciousness of the masses in Guyana.

After 1964, Mr. Jagan spent a long sojourn — some 28 years — in the political opposition in Guyana. Throughout this period Mr. Jagan proved indomitable. He remained steadfast to his ideal of a better life in larger freedom for the Guyanese people and never abandoned his faith in the realization of this dream. He thus led a long and arduous struggle for the restoration of democracy in his homeland. For him the restoration of democracy was Guyana's only hope for survival.

In 1992, the first internationally certified free and fair elections in Guyana in 28 years resulted in Mr. Jagan's return to office as President of the Republic. As President, he dedicated enormous energies towards the eradication of poverty and the strengthening of our fragile democracy. Firmly committed to people-centred development, he kept Guyana on a path of sustained economic growth while addressing urgent social concerns. In fulfilment of his commitment to the World Summit on Social Development, this year 20 per cent of our national budget has been dedicated to the social sector, up from 8 per cent in 1992. Mr. Jagan's passionate concern for people led in his later years to his vision and strong advocacy for a new global human order that would redress the inequities of the present order.

Mr. Jagan has left behind a legacy of struggle, determination and triumph. He demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the upliftment of the working people, the poor and the disadvantaged. His passing is a great loss for our nation and its people. With these words, I wish once again to express my delegation's appreciation for the kind sentiments expressed in tribute to the memory of our late President. I will not fail to convey these sentiments to my authorities and to the bereaved members of Mr. Jagan's family.

Finally, I wish to associate my delegation fully with the sentiments expressed on the memory of Mr. Deng Xiaoping, the late Paramount Leader of the People's Republic of China. On behalf of the Government and people of Guyana, I wish to convey our heartfelt condolences to the Chinese delegation to the United Nations and to the Government and people of the People's Republic of China. Guyana shares in a very poignant way the great loss China has suffered.

Permit me to express to our sister Caribbean Community (CARICOM) State, Jamaica, the condolences of the delegation of Guyana and the Government and people of Guyana on the passing of the late Mr. Michael Manley, former Prime Minister. The passing of Mr. Manley is not only a great loss for Jamaica, but also a loss for our region. His work will greatly influence the continued work within the region, and we ask that these condolences be conveyed to the bereaved family.

The President: I now call on the representative of Jamaica.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): My delegation wishes to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, to thank the members of the Assembly for the condolences expressed on the passing of the former Prime Minister of Jamaica, Mr. Michael Manley.

Mr. Manley was a leader and a statesman who committed his life selflessly to serving the people of Jamaica and peoples across the globe. In a relentless search for solutions to the problems that confronted the downtrodden, the oppressed and the unfortunate among us, he sought to advance the goals of peace, justice and prosperity for all mankind.

His passing represents for us a monumental loss, and we wish to take this opportunity to thank again the members of the Assembly for their expression of sympathy in this, our time of grief and national loss, and I will convey these sentiments to the Government and people of Jamaica and to the members of Mr. Manley's bereaved family.

I wish also to take this opportunity to express our sincere condolences to the Government and people of China on the loss of their Paramount Leader, Mr. Deng Xiaoping, and to request the delegation of China to convey our sentiments to the members of the bereaved family and to the Government and people of China.

The passing of President Jagan leaves a void in the Caribbean, and I wish to take this opportunity to express to the delegation of Guyana the sincere condolences of the Government and people of Jamaica and of the delegation here, and we again request the delegation to convey our sincere condolences to the Government and people of Guyana.

Earthquake in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The President: May I, on behalf of all the members of the Assembly, extend our deepest sympathy to the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the tragic loss of life and extensive material damage that have resulted from the recent earthquake.

May I also express the hope that the international community will show its solidarity and respond promptly and generously to any request for help.

I now call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): May I convey my gratitude for the Assembly's expression of support and sympathy over the loss of nearly 1,000 lives and the injury of several thousand people as a result of the devastating earthquake in northern Iran. The magnitude 5.5 quake hit Ardebil province on Friday, 28 February 1997, and on Sunday, 2 March 1997, another earthquake of magnitude 5.1 hit the same area. As of yesterday, more than 920 aftershocks had been recorded. The harsh winter conditions have added to the existing difficulties in rendering assistance to the people affected by the earthquake.

The people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran have mobilized their resources to alleviate the suffering of the approximately 60,000 people who have been affected by the earthquake. According to the latest information I have received, the extent of the damage, besides the loss of human lives, is as follows: 20 villages destroyed; 80 villages, 40 to 90 per cent destroyed; 10,000 houses damaged by more than 40 per cent; 105 schools destroyed; 40 medical or health centres destroyed; 9 communications centres destroyed; 30 villages with water-distribution systems destroyed; and 30,000 livestock dead. Roads and electrical power lines also have been heavily damaged.

A national response was immediately provided by the provincial and national authorities as well as by the Iranian Red Crescent Society. The United Nations assessment team has visited the disaster area and confirmed the efficiency of the relief operation undertaken by the Government and the Iranian Red Crescent Society in an environment of snow and below-zero temperatures.

Finally, I should like to express our appreciation to the United Nations and its specialized agencies as well as to those Governments and non-governmental organizations that have contributed to the ongoing relief operations for the victims of the Ardebil earthquake.

Agenda item 119 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/51/780/Add.2)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/51/780/Add.2, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communications dated 21 and 30 January 1997, Afghanistan, Belarus, Djibouti, Honduras, Panama, Sierra Leone and Turkmenistan have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

The President: I have also been informed that Yemen has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

The President: This information will be reflected in an addendum to document A/51/780.

Agenda items 33 and 35 *(continued)*

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

The President: Members are aware that I have received a letter dated 8 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar (A/51/822) and a letter dated 10 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia (A/51/823), both of which requested an urgent meeting of the Assembly on these two items.

In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 and 43/177 of 15 December 1988, I now call on the Observer for Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): We come before the Assembly today to draw attention to the grave developments unfolding in the Middle East as a result of Israel's persistence, as the occupying Power, in pursuing its policies and measures to Judaize occupied East Jerusalem and to change its legal status and demographic composition, as well as Israel's continuing colonial settlement campaign in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 and its resumption of the

building of colonial settlements there. All these measures represent a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and relevant United Nations resolutions and are a breach of the agreements concluded within the framework of the Middle East peace process.

We come before the Assembly today following the failure of the Security Council to carry out its duties under the Charter of the United Nations due to the decision of one of the Council's permanent members — the United States of America — to use its veto power on 7 March 1997 with regard to a draft resolution sponsored by France, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom concerning East Jerusalem and the issue of settlements. The draft resolution did, however, receive 14 votes in favour from the members of the Council. It is our hope that the General Assembly will adopt the necessary position, based on international law, justice and concern for the peace process in the Middle East, by calling on Israel to refrain from its illegal policies and measures, including the building of settlements, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem.

We affirm the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with regard to the question of Palestine until a comprehensive resolution of the question in all its aspects is attained. We furthermore affirm that the duties of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security naturally include the Middle East. The existence of the peace process and the agreements between the parties does not diminish this responsibility, but rather reinforces it, so that it includes providing support for and protecting the process, as well as confirming the parties' compliance with their contractual obligations.

Israel's violation of its contractual obligations has caused great damage to the peace process and threatens the possibilities for achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. This is particularly evident because such violations include violations of international humanitarian law and relevant United Nations resolutions. This makes it necessary for the General Assembly and the Security Council to fulfil their duties to preserve the peace process and to uphold international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. This becomes imperative as Israel takes unilateral measures to impose new facts on the ground, thus causing the breakdown of the forthcoming negotiations between the parties and exploiting its power.

To preserve international law, principles of justice and ethical values it is necessary for the international community, represented by the United Nations, to reiterate its firm position with regard to the consequences of such illegal Israeli policies and measures. This includes reaffirming that all legislative and administrative measures taken by Israel aimed at changing the legal status of Jerusalem and its demographic composition are legally null and void; that Israeli settlements are illegal and represent a great obstacle on the road to peace; that the plight of Palestinian refugees must be resolved through their right to return or through compensation; and that the acquisition of territory by acts of war is inadmissible. What has been done illegally will remain illegal, and this will not change with the passage of time or a change in circumstances.

The Government of Israel decided on 26 February 1997 to build a new colonial settlement in the area of Jabal Abu Ghneim in occupied Palestinian territory. This area lies within the territory that Israel annexed and considers a part of the extended municipal boundaries of the city of Jerusalem. This has been done illegally and in blatant violation of international humanitarian law and relevant Security Council resolutions. The new Israeli decision provides for the building of 6,500 housing units on an area of 1,850 dunums which were confiscated during 1991 and 1992 and which will bring in about 25,000 new Israeli settlers. This colonial settlement will isolate Arab East Jerusalem from the southern part of the West Bank and isolate Jerusalem as a whole from the city of Bethlehem.

This Israeli measure follows a series of Israeli measures and actions regarding Jerusalem. Earlier, Israel demolished a building belonging to the Burj al-Laqlaq Association inside the walled Old City in an attempt to revive a settlement plan in that holy place. On 23 September 1996 the Israeli authorities also opened a tunnel in the vicinity of Al-Haram al-Sharif, creating further changes in the nature of the city. In that case, Israel refused, as usual, to abide by Security Council resolution 1073 (1996), which in its first paragraph called for the immediate cessation and reversal of all acts aggravating the situation and having negative implications for the Middle East peace process. Furthermore, in the second week of December 1996 the Israeli authorities declared the Government's intentions to implement a plan for the building of a colonial settlement composed of 132 housing units for Jewish settlers in the heart of occupied East Jerusalem, in Ras al-Amud, near Al-Haram al-Sharif.

The Israeli authorities continue their attempts to deprive the Palestinians of Jerusalem of their natural and inherited right to live in their city as their ancestors did. Israel considers them foreigners and has used various

illegal manoeuvres and measures to deprive them of what it calls rights of residence. These include, for example, its attempts to enforce such a measure in connection with all those who live temporarily outside of Jerusalem or have acquired a second citizenship.

Furthermore, Israel has long enforced the isolation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory and shut the Palestinian people out of the city, despite the fact that it is the economic, cultural and religious centre of the Palestinian people. This constitutes another Israeli attempt to impose a de facto situation with regard to Jerusalem, a blatant violation of the rights of the Palestinian people and a defiance of the will of the international community.

In addition to all this, the Israeli Government has resumed its settlement activities in all the occupied Palestinian territory, including the building of new housing units, the transfer of new settlers, the confiscation of more lands, the building of bypass roads and the further exploitation of our natural resources. All these activities flagrantly violate The Hague Rules of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. The Security Council, in 24 resolutions, has reaffirmed the applicability of the Convention to all the territories occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem. These measures also constitute a violation of several General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on Jerusalem in general and settlements in particular.

Such Israeli measures and practices also violate the agreements already reached between the Palestinian and Israeli sides and the logic of the entire peace process. The two parties concurred in those agreements to postpone negotiations on specific issues, including Jerusalem and the settlements, to the second stage, which by necessity requires the parties to refrain from any unilateral action creating more facts on the ground and dooming the forthcoming negotiations to failure.

Israel's acceptance of the status of Jerusalem as an issue to be negotiated; its agreement to classify Jerusalem as an electoral district among the general Palestinian districts, with seven representatives in the Palestinian Legislative Council; and the commitment made in a letter by its former Foreign Minister to preserve the Palestinian institutions in the city clearly prove that all the Israeli measures currently being taken are illegal even in the light of agreements reached between the Palestinian and Israeli sides.

In any event, Jerusalem is an issue of central importance to the Palestinian people, the Arab world and the Islamic Ummah, since Jerusalem is the first kiblah and the third holiest sanctuary of Islam and is also of great importance to the followers of the three monotheistic religions and to the entire international community. Accordingly, Jerusalem will not accept the imposition of monopoly or sole ownership by any of the parties.

We will not accept the annulment of Palestinian and Arab rights in Holy Jerusalem and we believe that the international community should affirm its rejection of the illegal Israeli positions, which affect the interests of all the other parties. We affirm that there can be no peace in the Middle East without the restoration of our legal rights in Holy Jerusalem.

From the moment the current Israeli Government came to power, there have been great tension and a retreat from all the progress and achievements of the peace process. The Government has adopted broad political guidelines that violate the basic foundations upon which the peace process was established and all the agreements reached between the Palestinian and Israeli sides. These guidelines have been implemented through the practices and measures that I have enumerated regarding the Israeli settlement system in the occupied territory, the situation in Holy Jerusalem and the continued closure and siege of Palestinian territory, all of which represent an actual threat to the peace process and its continuity.

Despite all the hopes raised after the conclusion of the protocol on redeployment from Hebron and the note for the record, which were considered as marking the beginning of a new era, this Government's reversion to the same policies and measures — including its decisions to build the settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim and to close independent Palestinian institutions in occupied East Jerusalem — has served only to dash these hopes.

In addition, Israel's negotiating positions have completely prevented progress in the implementation of the agreements reached, particularly with regard to such long-overdue issues as safe passage, the seaport and the airport. Finally, Israel's announcement of redeployment from 2 per cent of the West Bank, which in fact keeps about 70 per cent of the total area of the West Bank under complete Israeli control, is merely an attempt to pass this measure off as the first of the three steps of the second stage of the redeployment. This latest Israeli

action was taken unilaterally, without negotiations with the Palestinian side, and cannot be considered an honest implementation of the agreement, which provides for the completion of the second stage of redeployment by March 1998, but no later than mid-1998, and would maintain the Israeli forces only at agreed military locations.

The most important matter in all of this should not be the details of Israel's practices and behaviour, which are indeed very complex, but what they represent, which are policies seeming to aim at the retention of a large portion of the occupied territory, including East Jerusalem, and at preventing the Palestinian people from enjoying their inalienable rights. Such designs totally contradict the mutual recognition of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and the text and spirit of the agreements reached, which specify the aim of the process: the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

This is the problem. We should not attempt to hide it and the draft resolution should focus on it. The solution is to guarantee the real and actual compliance of the Israeli Government with the agreements reached and their complete implementation in good faith and in accordance with the agreed timetables. Furthermore, this Government should refrain from taking any measure or action that violates international humanitarian law and relevant Security Council resolutions. This is the road to the just, permanent and comprehensive peace in the region towards which we are working and for which the entire international community should strive. Any other course of action will lead to other, less desirable results for which the Israeli side will bear sole and complete responsibility. We have confidence that the General Assembly will play out its natural and positive role in this regard.

Mr. Peleg (Israel): Since the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991, Israel and its Arab neighbours have been engaged in creating and nurturing peace for our region. Our hope is to end the cycle of hatred, violence and bloodshed which has gripped our region for so long. The only way to do this, as has been proved time and again, is through face-to-face negotiations. The Madrid formula of 1991 has yielded many fruits thus far for the Middle East and all its peoples.

On 13 September 1993 Israel and the Palestinians embarked on our historic reconciliation. One year later Israel signed a Treaty of Peace with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It is our hope that negotiations with Syria and Lebanon will resume in the near future as well. The steering committee of the multilateral working group is scheduled to meet later this month in Moscow, after which the five multilateral working groups are to meet. We hope for substantial progress in these meetings as well, for the benefit of all our peoples and our future generations.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on 13 September 1993 began a new relationship between our two peoples, based on the understanding that grievances between us can be resolved only through direct negotiations. Time and again this method of direct negotiations has been vindicated and has brought tangible benefits to the whole region. The Declaration of Principles and all the subsequent agreements between Israel and the Palestinians — from the Cairo agreement of 4 May 1994 and the Israel-Palestine Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 28 September 1995, through the Hebron protocol signed less than two months ago — were all achieved through direct negotiations between the parties themselves, for which there has been no substitute. We had our disagreements, and we faced many difficult moments. But these agreements were reached because both sides remained committed to talking through the issues and negotiating in good faith. Significantly, these agreements have codified appropriate mechanisms to discuss outstanding issues and to settle disagreements and disputes, without the threat of violence and without the interference of outside parties.

In addition to providing for the redeployment of the Israeli Defence Force in the West Bank city of Hebron, the Hebron protocol of 17 January 1997 created timetables for further redeployment in the West Bank and for the imminent resumption of the permanent status negotiations. Last week the Government of Israel approved the plan for the first further redeployment. The decision involves a significant redeployment in the West Bank. In addition, all female Palestinian prisoners were released from Israeli jails and nine committees were formed to discuss all outstanding issues, including the construction of an airport and seaport in Gaza and the issue of safe passage. Further steps were also taken to address the economic situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including increasing the number of Palestinians allowed to work in Israel to 70,000.

Our sincere hope was and still is that the Hebron protocol and the subsequent actions will increase mutual trust and create an atmosphere conducive to advancing the

peace process. However, despite the progress that has been achieved thus far, the Palestinians have regrettably fallen into a dysfunctional behavioural pattern. Lately, whenever contentious issues have arisen between us, instead of seeking redress of these issues through the agreed mechanisms — i.e., direct negotiations — the Palestinians have run to third parties and bodies not involved in the peace process, with the hope of imposing their positions on Israel.

Israel is committed to providing services to all the residents of Jerusalem. It is important here to distinguish between two separate issues: the issue of Jerusalem and the issue of the settlements. These issues will be discussed separately in the context of the permanent status negotiations, which are scheduled to resume later this month. Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Israel, is a living, breathing city with its own particular growth and development needs for both its Jewish and non-Jewish populations. Israel is committed to the unity and the well-being of Jerusalem, to coexistence and cooperation between Jews, Christians and Muslims and to the development of Jerusalem for the benefit of all of its residents.

I would like here to state unequivocally that the Government of Israel does not regard the United Nations as the appropriate forum for discussing issues of contention between Israel and the Palestinians; not the Security Council, and not the General Assembly. What are the Palestinians seeking from the United Nations: to turn the clock back to the dark days preceding the peace process, to the days of enmity, confrontation and stagnation? Let us all reject these old methods. The multitude of United Nations resolutions relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict failed to advance the peace process even one inch. Direct negotiations, beginning in Madrid and continuing for the better part of this decade, have proved the only way to advance the cause of peace in our region.

Israel, too, has grievances concerning Palestinian violations of our agreements. But we prefer not to misuse this body to air our concerns. We prefer to do so directly with the Palestinians, as agreed by the two sides. The United Nations should not be the forum to ask why the PLO, despite written promises, has failed to complete the process of revoking the provisions of its charter that call for the destruction of the State of Israel. Neither is the United Nations the place to ask why the Palestinians resort to violence when their negotiating demands are not fully met.

Likewise, we have not run to the United Nations when the Palestinian Authority opened offices in Jerusalem in violation of the agreements signed with Israel. Jerusalem is not included inside the area in which Palestinian autonomy authorities are to have powers or responsibilities. And we have not turned to the United Nations whenever Arab buildings in Jerusalem are constructed or renovated without the required permits.

To the Palestinians we say, "Let us agree on a code of conduct for our future negotiations and relations. Let us agree on the following: negotiations will be direct; violence and armed struggle are invalid means; reciprocity is the basis of all our agreements." This code of conduct could serve as a blueprint for the continued dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel's message to the international community is this: continue to support the peace process, but do not adopt one-sided positions that aim to prejudge and predetermine the outcome of our negotiations. Israel is committed to the peace process. And we trust that together with our Arab neighbours we will reach the promised land of comprehensive peace and economic prosperity for the entire region.

The President: I call next on the representative of Senegal, who will speak in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Ka (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (*interpretation from French*): It is with real pleasure, Sir, that I see you presiding over this important meeting of the General Assembly, urgently convened at the request of the Group of Arab States for a reason known to us all. It is regrettable that the Security Council did not respond to the decision of the Israeli Government, the occupying Power, to build a new settlement in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area in southern East Jerusalem, even though the members of the Council and all other delegations that participated in the debate on 5 and 6 March 1997 unanimously denounced and rejected that decision. Various other measures Israel has adopted to strengthen its grip on East Jerusalem in advance of the negotiations were also referred to during the Council debate.

On 7 March the Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution submitted by France, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which would have called upon the Israeli authorities to refrain from all actions or measures,

including settlement activities, which alter the facts on the ground, pre-empting the final status negotiations, and have negative implications for the Middle East peace process.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People regrets that this draft resolution was not adopted owing to the negative vote of a member of the Security Council. In the view of the Committee, a resolution reaffirming the Security Council's earlier decisions would have been timely and would indeed have helped progress in the peace process. Nonetheless, we note with satisfaction that the other members of the Security Council voted in favour of the draft resolution, thus sending a clear political message to the Israeli authorities: that the whole international community considers their decision to be a serious violation of United Nations resolutions and of international law, and that this Israeli decision could well compromise the Middle East peace process and the integrity of the agreements reached between the Israeli Government and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

While it is true that the peace process has moved forward somewhat, as shown in particular by the recent agreement on redeployment of the Israeli army in Hebron — a redeployment which the international community viewed as a major event that made it possible for the peace process to be resumed — the illegal decision of the Israeli Government is a major source of concern because of the harsh blow it could deal the Middle East peace process. Combined with other measures on East Jerusalem and the obstacles and delays experienced throughout the peace process, this decision casts serious doubt on the commitment and political will of the occupying Power to implement the provisions of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements and on its will to establish just peace with the Palestinians on the basis of the formula established at Madrid and Oslo.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is deeply concerned at this situation, which could have a negative impact on the final status negotiations, which are of deep concern not only to the peoples of the region but to the entire international community.

The status of Jerusalem/Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the future of the occupied Palestinian territories fall within the purview of international law and the will of the international community. The status of that international city has been the subject of numerous statements by the international community and by the Security Council. The annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967 and the Israeli law naming Jerusalem as the State capital were rejected by the Security Council, which declared those measures null and void.

Many United Nations resolutions, notably Security Council resolutions 446 (1979), 452 (1979) and 465 (1980), have condemned Israel's policy of building settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. Moreover, that policy of the occupying Power is a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention; all the measures taken by Israel in this sphere are without legal validity and should be rescinded.

Some argue that the United Nations should not address these matters, and that they should be dealt with in the permanent status negotiations; this argument is unacceptable to us. First of all, the fact that the parties decided to negotiate within a given framework in no way negates the respect that must be accorded the principles of international law, and does not end the role of the United Nations and the international community in safeguarding international law.

Furthermore, the Committee considers that the goal of the agreed peace process is to bring about the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which are based on the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. The international community in general and the United Nations in particular must be closely involved in the various stages of the peace process and must continue to help the process along and keep it on track.

We must not forget that the General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed that the United Nations will bear a central ongoing responsibility with regard to the question of Palestine until all aspects of that question are resolved in accordance with international law.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is convinced that the peace process will make progress only if both parties are genuinely prepared to implement all measures and provisions in the agreements they so courageously and painstakingly concluded. At this critical stage, it is essential for the success of the peace process for the parties to spare no effort to do away with such factors as the climate of mistrust and suspicion.

The international community, and the leaders who were bold enough to make a historic breakthrough for peace, must not be disappointed. It is essential that the peace process not be compromised by short-sighted policies. Here, as elsewhere, it is crucial that the parties consider the issue from a political and historical perspective.

The Committee believes that now more than ever, genuine political will is needed to resume the peace process and prevent the situation from deteriorating once again, which could undermine the efforts made by all those peace-loving peoples throughout the world who have worked so hard for the dawning of an era of peace, understanding and stability in the Middle East.

It is in the interest of all the peoples in the region for the Israeli leaders to recognize, as soon as possible, that this peace can be achieved only if it is a just one. This quest for peace requires compromise and the establishment of a genuine partnership of trust.

In the final analysis, the repeated denial of the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people cannot easily be reconciled with the efforts to continue and consolidate the peace process.

The convening of this meeting by the members of the General Assembly sends a clear signal to international public opinion regarding the extent to which the decision taken by the Israeli Government is untimely and fraught with consequences. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People hopes that following this debate, the General Assembly will show overwhelmingly its firm resolve to see to it that Israel rescinds its decision to build housing units for Jewish settlers in the area of Jabal Abu Ghneim and puts an end to its policy of Judaizing the Holy City of Jerusalem, a city that symbolizes the peaceful coexistence of believers from the three monotheistic religions — this city which must remain, as its name indicates, a city of peace.

As I stated in the Security Council, it is high time that all the peoples in the region, who have made irreplaceable contributions to our civilization, learn to live together in mutual respect and forge a peace that would benefit the region as a whole.

In conclusion, like previous speakers, I should like to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency the late Mr. Deng Xiaoping, Paramount Leader of the People's Republic of China, who passed away recently. Possessed of outstanding statesmanlike qualities, foresight and wisdom, he has left, through his efforts to ensure the prosperity of the Chinese people, an indelible mark on history at the end of this century.

Two other great leaders have passed away recently: President Cheddi Jagan of Guyana and the former Prime Minister of Jamaica, Mr. Michael Manley, both of whom also were illustrious statesmen. We would like to express our sympathy and to pay a well-deserved tribute to them.

Finally, we would like to convey our condolences to the Government of Pakistan and the Government of Iran on the loss of human life they have suffered in the wake of the natural disasters that struck their countries.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like at the outset, on behalf of my delegation and on that of the other members of the League of Arab States — Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen — to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this special meeting of the General Assembly to discuss the situation in the Arab occupied territories, and in particular Israel's decision to build settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim, in East Jerusalem.

I should like also to thank the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, who facilitated the convening of this meeting. My gratitude goes also to the Security Council members that are also members of the European Union — Portugal, Sweden, France and Great Britain — for their work and their co-sponsorship of the European draft resolution submitted to the Security Council, which received 14 votes in favour but was not adopted because of the veto of one of the permanent members.

Once again, the United States of America has vetoed a draft resolution relating to Jerusalem — a draft resolution that received 14 votes in favour. It last did this on 17 May 1994, when Israel confiscated Arab-owned land in Jerusalem. This is a deplorable situation, since the United States has played a key role in the Middle East process since the Madrid Conference. Such conduct, in the eyes of the Arab Group, abets the current Israeli Government in its attempts to continue carrying out its settlement policies in occupied Arab territories in order to annex them.

The peace process, founded on the principle of land for peace, is thus endangered. Israel's current conduct flies in the face of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 252 (1968), 271 (1969), 298 (1971), 478 (1980) and 672 (1990). These resolutions state that any administrative or legislative measures taken by Israel to change the legal status or demographic composition of Jerusalem are null and void and devoid of legal value. The international community has also categorically rejected Israeli assertions regarding Jerusalem and has reiterated that Israeli authority is not recognized on the territory of East Jerusalem.

We call upon the international community to prevent Israel from continuing to flout these resolutions and thereby contravene international law. This peace process exists because of the Madrid Conference and the efforts of the parties involved, and particularly those of the United States, which played a privileged role in convening the Madrid Conference and in the Washington Declaration of 1993, as well as during subsequent stages.

We would not have had to call for this meeting of the General Assembly had the Security Council discharged its role as the United Nations body primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

This is why we are addressing the General Assembly today. It is the body that reflects international opinion and the views of all the Members of the United Nations, and no Member here has any privileges such as the veto.

The Security Council nevertheless bears special responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations. Peace is not the responsibility of Arabs and Palestinians alone. It is a responsibility shared among all parties and the international community. The fact that Israel is flouting international authority not only threatens Arab-Israeli peace, but also the credibility of international opinion as reflected in the United Nations.

The Palestinian party calls for negotiations on the settlements and Jerusalem as part and parcel of the final negotiations. We do not agree with the Israeli position of thwarting these negotiations before they begin. The Interim Agreement signed in Washington in 1995 states that no party must take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and Gaza before the negotiations have been concluded. That includes the status of Jerusalem and the issues of refugees, settlements, borders and security measures.

The Israeli Government's decision flies in the face of that agreement and flouts the Geneva Convention of 1949, as well as several General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The statements made in the Security Council and the votes of 14 States in favour of the European Union-sponsored draft resolution are a condemnation of Israeli policy, including settlement policy, despite the stubbornness of one permanent member that has veto power.

The Arab Group calls upon its friends and the friends of peace in the General Assembly, members of our great family representing mankind as a whole, to send a clear and categorical message rejecting Israel's practices and policies that jeopardize the peace process in the Middle East and take the region back to a period of confrontation and wasteful armament rather than constructive development for the good of mankind.

Mr. Wisnumurti (Indonesia): The international community is faced with yet another attempt by the Government of Israel to renege on its legal commitments under the Oslo accords and the subsequent agreements and to undermine the peace process in the Middle East. The Indonesian delegation condemns the illegal Israeli decision of 26 February 1997 to build a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim in Jerusalem. The failure of the Security Council on 7 March 1997 to discharge its mandate under the Charter is a source of profound disappointment and regret to my delegation. This failure signals not merely the obstruction of the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the members of the Council, but above all the stifling of the voices of those outside the Council, within the Middle East region and beyond, who have called on Israel to rescind its decision. It is now therefore essential that the General Assembly address this urgent matter.

My delegation deems it most appropriate and timely at this critical juncture in the peace process that the General Assembly articulate unambiguously the feelings and views of the international community, for the question before us is indisputably clear. The Israeli decision constitutes a flagrant violation of resolutions of this body and of the Security Council, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968) and 338 (1973), which, *inter alia*, emphasize the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and consider invalid all measures and actions taken by Israel which seek to

change the legal status of Jerusalem. It is a decision which is in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of other rules of international law. It is totally contrary to the letter and spirit of the Declaration of Principles and the subsequent agreements, not least because it seeks to pre-empt the outcome of the permanent status negotiations by changing the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem.

By contrast, the Palestinians have demonstrated great restraint and patience and have opted for peaceful means to resolve the current crisis. Their appeal for concrete action by the Security Council has unfortunately been frustrated by a negative vote of one of the permanent members of the Council. Therefore it is now imperative that the voice of reason and justice of the international community be heard through the deliberations of this meeting of the General Assembly and that effective measures be adopted to address the illegal action of Israel.

The urgency of the matter is beyond doubt, for what is at stake is the very credibility of the agreements already reached and, indeed, the wider peace process. It is my delegation's conviction that the international community must help save the peace process from the irresponsible policies and practices of Israel which systematically undermine the wish of the international community to find a peaceful solution in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. The provocative Israeli actions will only lead to further bloodshed, with all the attendant dangerous consequences which will jeopardize peace and security in the Middle East.

Actions that could jeopardize the peace process must be condemned and the endeavours for peace be made irreversible. The gains attained thus far in the peace process are indeed of historic significance. It is now up to Israel to implement scrupulously the provisions of the various agreements reached with the Palestinians.

The consequence of inaction by the international community in the face of Israel's blatant disregard of the agreements already reached should be obvious. There will be more breaches of resolutions of the Council, the General Assembly and international law. The latest Israeli decision follows decisions to build a new settlement in Ras al-Amud and the opening of the tunnel located within Haram al-Sharif, and therefore constitutes part of a concerted effort to isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. There is thus a clear pattern of provocative Israeli acts which derive encouragement from any signs of inaction on the part of the international community. Their recent intensification, while deeply troubling, is thus, at the same time, not altogether surprising. The present Israeli Government is reneging with apparent impunity on its obligations under the Oslo accords. The latest crisis caused by the Israeli decision to hand over only nine per cent of the West Bank instead of 30 per cent, as had been agreed upon and expected by Palestinian leaders, simply confirmed this unfortunate reality.

Much more is at stake than written agreements. The mutual trust and confidence that have been painstakingly built over the past four years risk being dissipated. The very integrity of the peace process is being unilaterally challenged and there can be no doubt where the onus of responsibility lies. The Government of Israel cannot shirk its responsibility for the consequences emanating from its ill-conceived policies and practices.

The settlement of the question of Palestine — that is, the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people — is a prerequisite for achieving a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. It has been our hope ever since the Madrid peace process was initiated in 1991 that progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track of negotiations would have a positive spillover effect on the other tracks of negotiations. In reality, progress on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks has remained stubbornly slow due to the lack of concrete evidence of Israeli commitment to the peace process.

Clearly, therefore, the prospect of a return to the old legacy of enmity and mistrust on the Israeli-Palestinian track of negotiations caused by the policies of the present Israeli Government bodes ill for the entire Middle East peace process. For peace, justice and stability to prevail in the Middle East, the United Nations must ensure the unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan and Lebanon, through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

I should, finally, like to take this occasion to refer to the communiqué adopted by the Islamic Group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in New York at its meeting on 3 March 1997. There, the Islamic Group, *inter alia*, called on the Security Council to take urgent steps to ensure that the Government of Israel reverse its decision and renounce any settlement activity in all Arab occupied territories, in particular East Jerusalem. As Chairman of the Islamic Group and as a

representative of a country that has long stood firm on the principles of respect for the rights of the Palestinians and their claim to sovereignty over their land, I should like today to direct that call to the General Assembly of the United Nations so that it may do what the Security Council has failed to do: compel the Government of Israel to reverse its decision and to desist from policies and actions which are contrary to the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and agreements already reached and incompatible with the ongoing peace process.

Mr. Konishi (Japan): Japan believes that efforts to improve the present situation in the Middle East should be carried out on a double track. The immediate task is for the parties directly involved to engage in efforts to bridge the chasm of mistrust that separates them by refraining from any action that could harm the prospects of the peace process. On a more fundamental level and at the same time, it is imperative that the parties intensify their efforts, in good faith and with steadfast determination, to advance the peace process.

From this point of view, Japan considers regrettable the decision made by the Government of Israel on the construction of housing at Har Homa — or, in Arabic, Jabal Abu Ghneim — in East Jerusalem. It is particularly unfortunate that this decision was made in the wake of the agreement that had been reached between Israel and the Palestine Authority on Hebron. In Japan's view, that agreement symbolized a step forward towards advancing the Middle East peace process.

Japan believes that the decision of the Government of Israel runs the risk of jeopardizing the basic situation concerning the occupied territory and of prejudging the outcome of the final status negotiations. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the fact that the Government of Israel took its decision at precisely the time when the Middle East peace process, and particularly its Palestinian track, is at a crucial stage.

On 27 February, when Foreign Minister Levy of Israel visited Japan, Prime Minister Hashimoto emphasized that Japan regretted the decision of the Government of Israel, since it constituted a negative factor for the peace process.

The Government of Japan has since been urging the parties involved to make every effort not to allow the present situation to develop into a major obstacle to the peace process and to do their utmost to push that process further forward. In Japan's view, it is not too late for the Government of Israel to reconsider its decision.

It is out of the same concern for restoring peace in the region that Japan has been actively involving itself in the peace process in the Middle East, in particular through active participation in the multilateral talks that began with the Madrid Conference in October 1991. My country, as a member of the Steering Group and as gavel-holder of the Working Group on Environment, has been instrumental in providing a favourable environment that will assist the direct talks among the parties concerned. Also as part of those efforts, Japan has been implementing various projects, worth approximately $250 million, to promote Palestinian self-rule in its initial phase after the Oslo accord. With a view to creating a new spirit of mutual confidence and joint cooperation among the countries of the region, Japan has been calling on the countries concerned to convene a plenary meeting of the environmental Working Group, as well as a meeting of the Steering Group for the multilateral talks, at the earliest possible time so that the Palestinian track may proceed smoothly following the Hebron agreement.

There is a very real danger that the Israeli decision could lead to a crisis of confidence. If that should happen, the resulting mistrust and rancour among the parties could destroy the very structure for peace in the Middle East. It is my earnest hope that all the parties concerned will exert their best efforts to overcome the present situation and, in so doing, offer the people of the region solid grounds for hope towards a more peaceful and secure future.

Mr. De Silva (Sri Lanka): The delegation of Sri Lanka wishes to express its grave concern at the decision of the Government of Israel to commence the construction of nearly 6,500 housing units in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area of East Jerusalem. This is a step taken in furtherance and as part of its illegal policy of expanding settlements in the West Bank of Palestine, designed to alter the demographic character of this integral part of Palestine, and an attempt to frustrate the establishment of a sovereign State in Palestine.

As Palestine is a land under alien occupation, such acts on the part of Israel, as the occupying Power, are unlawful and in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. The confiscation of land and property of the Palestinian people is, likewise, not merely a violation of their inalienable rights but also an attempt to pre-empt the outcome of the impending talks on the final status of Jerusalem. Such acts need to be deplored because they are calculated to negate the hard-won gains

of the peace process that has inched its way forward amid overwhelming odds.

If there is to be evidence of a genuine wish for peace on the part of Israel, and negotiations are not to be a mere cloak for deception, there has to be radical change of heart. Israel must adopt a more humane attitude towards the Palestinian people, who have endured great hardship and tribulation for nearly half a century, in particular since the 1967 war, which resulted in the subjugation of Palestine by Israel.

It is the very nearly universal view of Member States of the United Nations that the Government of Israel must desist from following these regressive policies of settlement expansion on the West Bank and other practices which deprive Palestinians of their rights because they are so inimical to peace in the Middle East. Israel must refrain from acts likely to ignite conflict which could set the whole region ablaze.

We call upon Israel to comply with its international obligations and responsibilities as an occupying Power under the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which indisputably apply to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. We also appeal to all parties to this conflict to adhere to their commitments to peace and to pursue negotiations for a just settlement of this question.

Finally, in our view the international community has an onerous duty and obligation to enforce Israel's compliance with its obligations under the peace agreements, the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the applicable principles of international law. This task must be undertaken without evasion and equivocation. It necessitates the immediate cessation of the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements and the dismantling of those that exist illegally within the occupied Palestinian territory and other Arab lands.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): This urgent meeting of the Assembly has been convened at the request of the Arab Group and the Non-Aligned Movement to consider the current, potentially dangerous situation in the Middle East, which has arisen from the decision of the Israeli Government to build a new Jewish settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem. My delegation believes that by convening this meeting, the General Assembly is carrying out its responsibility, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, in the wake of the Security Council's failure to pronounce itself on this important issue.

My delegation, along with 47 other delegations, participated in the formal meeting of the Security Council on this issue last week. My delegation had expected that, given the sentiments expressed by an overwhelming majority of the delegations that spoke, the Council would have endorsed the draft resolution which had been tabled. That draft resolution, which was couched in most reasonable and moderate language, had, *inter alia*, expressed deep concern at the decision of the Israeli Government to initiate new settlement activities in East Jerusalem. It called upon the Israeli authorities to refrain from all actions or measures, including settlement activities, which would alter the facts on the ground and thereby pre-empt the final status negotiations and undermine the fragile peace process. To our great disappointment, that draft resolution was vetoed by a permanent member of the Council, thereby frustrating the will of the international community, as expressed by the overwhelming majority of Council members, which wanted the Council to pronounce itself on this important issue. My delegation does not accept the contention that the Security Council and the General Assembly are not the appropriate forums to discuss the Middle East issue. This contention is intended to sideline the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, and to allow the power imperatives of certain States to hold sway on the issue.

It has been claimed that the multitude of United Nations resolutions relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict have failed to advance the peace process even one inch. We need not ask ourselves why this is so. The answer is patently clear to all who have followed the issue closely.

It is therefore up to this Assembly to address this issue of utmost importance to peace and security in the Middle East. My delegation believes that this Assembly can and will pronounce itself on this issue in unambiguous terms.

Since the beginning of the Madrid peace process in October 1991, my delegation has noted and welcomed the positive developments that have taken place. The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in September 1993 and the subsequent agreements, in particular the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 1995, have led to the phased withdrawal of Israeli forces from six major towns in the West Bank and to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the deployment of a Palestinian police force in the areas concerned.

Last year we witnessed further encouraging developments which constituted important political steps towards achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem. The election of representatives to the Palestinian Legislative Council and of a Palestinian National Authority President in January 1996 was followed by the negotiations on the permanent status of the Palestinian territory on 5 May 1996, although it was adjourned after a number of procedural decisions had been agreed upon. All these positive developments have been followed and welcomed by the international community.

We are further encouraged by the signing of the Hebron protocol on 17 January this year, which led to the redeployment of Israeli troops from most parts of Hebron, to be followed by a three-phased withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank beginning in the first week of March 1997. This development has been widely regarded as a positive step towards the full realization of the long-awaited comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Both parties were expected to honour their commitments in good faith and refrain from taking any measures which could undermine the peace process.

Unfortunately, instead of honouring its commitments, the Israeli Government has, in an act of bad faith, taken a unilateral decision to approve the construction of a new Jewish settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim, in defiance of Palestinian sentiments. Clearly, this was a deliberate and provocative act, intended to break the spirit of the Palestinian people and to deny them their cherished dream of a State of their own, with Jerusalem as its capital. It is not intended to inspire and encourage, but to humiliate and intimidate. It is not an act of statesmanship, but one of brinkmanship. It is a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a blatant contravention of the relevant United Nations resolutions. It could have serious negative repercussions on the peace process. Instead of building confidence and understanding, the Israeli Government has chosen to build new settlements in violation of established principles of international law and its own treaty commitments. Such a decision only breeds suspicion and mistrust.

We have just heard from the Permanent Observer of Palestine a litany of Israeli violations of international conventions and of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council. One can therefore question the real commitment of Israel to peace. The latest decision of the Israeli Government to withdraw from only 9 per cent of the occupied territories in the West Bank is yet another manifestation of bad faith which could further undermine the already delicate situation.

As it did during the Council debate, my delegation reiterates its strong condemnation of this Israeli measure and calls on the Israeli Government to rescind its decision and to desist from taking any further unilateral actions which could undermine the still fragile peace process. My delegation regrets the failure of the Security Council to adopt the draft resolution, which had the support of 14 of its 15 members. With the failure of the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility, my delegation would therefore urge the Assembly to pronounce itself on this important issue. My delegation believes that the adoption an appropriately worded draft resolution by this Assembly is necessary to convey the international community's strong disapproval of the decision of the Israeli Government. That is the least that the Assembly can do in support of the Palestinian Authority and of the people of Palestine, who have exercised the utmost restraint in the face of this latest provocation.

Jerusalem is a city of great spiritual importance not only to the Jews but also to the entire Muslim and Christian communities. The issue of Jerusalem should be settled through negotiations, not through unilateral preemptive measures. My delegation, therefore, cannot accept any policies adopted or illegal measures taken by Israel in occupied East Jerusalem aimed at judaizing the city and changing its legal status and demographic character to advance its own political and strategic interests. My delegation believes that in the interest of securing a durable peace between Palestine and Israel no attempts should be made by the parties concerned which could prejudge the outcome of the final status negotiations.

Malaysia has consistently voiced its support for a comprehensive and just solution to the Middle East conflict, one that would bring durable peace and stability to all countries in the region consistent with the various resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. My delegation reaffirms Malaysia's total commitment to and unwavering support for the Palestinian people in their struggle to attain a just and lasting peace and an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey): One week ago, the situation in the occupied Arab territories, and particularly the building of new Israeli settlements, was debated in the Security Council. At that time, we expressed our views on this

critical issue. I would like to reiterate that the Turkish Government is most seriously concerned about the latest decision of the Israeli Government to approve a housing project in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, in defiance of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. We believe that the deliberations in the Council reflected the unanimous opposition of the international community to this unilateral Israeli initiative.

Israelis and Palestinians are partners in peace. This understanding and the progress achieved so far on the path to enduring peace and stability in the region have not come easily. They have required wisdom and farsightedness on the part of leaders, as well as sacrifice, perseverance and tremendous effort. So much has been achieved in peacemaking between the Arabs and the Israelis, leading very recently to the protocol on Al-Khalil and to the further redeployment of Israeli forces. These new developments finally cleared the way for the final status talks, which will also include negotiations on the future of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. We have approached the point at which the final peaceful resolution of this long-standing dispute is clearly in sight. However, it is disconcerting and very discouraging to encounter, as we have done so many times over the past eight months, unilateral actions endangering the peace process, which have the potential to cause serious disruptions and which could even deal the peace process a blow from which it might never recover.

Everyone is aware that the Israeli Government unfortunately views the Jabal Abu Ghneim project as a method for preempting the outcome of the negotiations on final status, particularly on the future of the Holy City, which is equally holy for all three major monotheistic religions. At a time when the commitment demonstrated by the Israeli Government to the established parameters of the peace process was rekindling our hopes for the future of the Middle East, the decision to allow construction in Jabal Abu Ghneim has once again caused deep worries with regard to the success of the process. Any decision which could affect the outcome of the final status talks should not even be considered until the successful conclusion of the negotiations.

The tragic events of last September following another unilateral decision by the Israeli Government regarding a holy site — again in Al-Quds — are vivid in our minds. The chain reaction provoked by that decision to open an archaeological tunnel passing under the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex should have been an important lesson for all the parties involved on what not to do at this critical point in time when, significantly, not only the future of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, but also the future of the entire Middle East peace process hangs in the balance.

In this vein I wish to confirm Turkey's unwavering support for and belief in the Middle East peace process, which we deem to be the only rational path to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. To achieve this goal, we urge the parties to adhere to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as to the Declaration of Principles and the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and thereby to contribute positively to the peace process.

Finally, I would like to repeat my Government's call on the Government of Israel to reconsider and reverse its policy of resuming settlement activities in Jabal Abu Ghneim and other occupied areas.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): The Bangladesh delegation believes that the convening of this urgent meeting of the General Assembly to discuss the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine is very timely and appropriate.

In recent weeks we have witnessed some ominous turns of events in the Middle East following a number of unilateral decisions taken by the Israeli Government. The Israeli decision to build new Jewish settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem has caused serious concern about prospects for the peace process. The latest blow emerged from the decision to partially withdraw Israeli troops from the West Bank in a manner chosen by Israel. No prior consultations were held with the Palestinian Authority on these moves; there was no consideration of obligations under the peace accords; nor was any respect for the process of a partnership towards peace shown by Israel. One is thus led to believe that the purpose of these decisions, taken on the eve of the commencement of the final status negotiations, was defined by a desire to significantly change the legal, physical and demographic character of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

It is believed that Israel also intends to isolate the Palestinian population of Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank so that they can never expect to fulfil their aspiration of making this city the capital of their independent state. It is indeed unfortunate to note that the Israeli Government is attempting to paralyse and eventually destroy the peace process, with a view to consigning the Palestinian people to perpetual subjugation and occupation. By any standard, these actions not only

violate the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the provisions of The Hague Convention of 1907 applicable to the occupied territories, as well as the letter and spirit of the peace accords, to which Israel is a party, but also constitutes an affront to the international community.

During the debate in the Security Council on this issue last week, 49 delegations spoke out, and almost all of them, including Bangladesh, expressed concern while deploring the Israeli decision to construct settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim, in East Jerusalem. They also called upon the Council to compel the Israeli Government to revoke its decision to construct these illegal settlements. The Israeli decision was seen as an expression of extreme arrogance and an act designed to create an obstacle on the road to peace.

Unfortunately, despite an overwhelming rejection of the Israeli action, the Security Council could not come up with a resolution urging Israel to rescind its decision in the greater interest of preserving a positive spirit of partnership for the peace process. We were told that adopting a resolution in the Security Council would not help the ongoing negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

We fail to understand how this could have happened. We are reminded time and again that the entire Middle East peace process, which began in Madrid in 1991 and was formalized through subsequent agreements between the Palestinians and the Israeli Government, was based essentially on the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council. One wonders how at this point in time this same Security Council could have lost its validity in terms of encouraging parties to work constructively to preserve the momentum of the peace process. We consider this to be a serious failure by the Council to respond effectively and in a timely manner in addressing an issue so crucial to peace and security in such a volatile region of the world. Nothing could be more unfortunate than to see Israel seize the opportunity presented by the Council's lack of initiative to intensify its unilateral actions on other crucial issues, showing utter disregard for the aspirations and rights of the Palestinian people.

The position of Bangladesh on the Middle East peace process is well known. We believe that no concept of partnership in peace can be promoted by unilateral actions. By the same token, Israel must understand that any meaningful progress on the road to peace on the Palestine-Israel track, which is the core of the Middle East peace process, must involve full, effective and meaningful participation by the Palestinians at all levels and at each step. We believe also that no peace will last in the Middle East without Jerusalem being the capital of the state of Palestine. We will therefore continue to support the just struggle of the Palestinian people to establish their homeland in Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital. Bangladesh is also of the view that complete withdrawal of all Israeli troops from all occupied Palestinian and Arab territories is an essential precondition for restoring a climate of trust and peace among the States in that region.

The international community bears a solemn responsibility to see that the Middle East peace process is not jeopardized by the provocative and irresponsible actions undertaken by one State in that region. Bangladesh therefore calls upon the General Assembly forcefully to pronounce itself against the unilateral decisions of Israel that could potentially damage the peace process. It also calls upon Israel to refrain from undertaking any activity detrimental to the promotion of mutual trust and understanding, which are so vital to the success of the ongoing peace process. Bangladesh also joins other delegations in sponsoring and strongly supporting the draft resolution presented on this question.

Mr. Londoño Paredes (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): This is the second time in the space of a year that it has been necessary to call for the convening of the General Assembly because of the refusal by one permanent member to enable the Security Council to discharge its responsibility to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security. Once again this veto is in reference to a situation that jeopardizes peace in the Middle East.

As stated by the overwhelming majority of the international community, and as demonstrated at the Security Council meetings held last Thursday and Friday, the decision by the Government of Israel to pursue its settlements policy in the occupied Arab territories, and specifically in Jerusalem, is a serious distortion of the spirit of the Oslo accords. It erodes the fragile climate of trust that had been achieved among the parties with the signing of the Hebron Protocol and affects the outcome of the permanent status negotiations that are to be held between Israel and the Palestine Authority. Furthermore — and this is what is most surprising about this veto of the draft resolution — Israel's decision flouts more than 24 previous Security Council resolutions on the situation in the occupied Arab territories.

Accordingly, it is a matter of concern that despite the widespread outcry of the international community, the will of one single State has prevented the Security Council from meeting its obligations. It is even more worrisome if we consider that one of the sponsors of the peace process in the Middle East is involved. This conduct, together with that State's increasing tendency to arrogate to itself the role — never assigned to it — of both judge and jury of all matters and all States, is sowing mistrust and resentment among the countries that have been its allies and friends.

At a time when emphasis is supposed to be placed on the preventive role of the United Nations, it is illogical to stand idly by and watch security deteriorate in a region where, after many years, the road to peace had finally been found.

It is up to the General Assembly to reiterate today to the Palestinian people the unfailing commitment of the United Nations to the search for peace and the international community's continuing support for the cause of peace in the Middle East.

I believe that it is necessary to recall today what was said on the subject of Jerusalem by the Heads of State or Government of the 113 countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement at the Cartagena Summit in 1995. They expressed, among other things, their unqualified support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to guarantee respect for its inalienable right to self-determination and independence and reiterated the demand that Israel withdraw from all occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including Jerusalem.

The Heads of State or Government also ratified all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on Jerusalem and called for the full and scrupulous implementation of the agreements, and in particular of the provisions contained in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 465 (1980) and 478 (1980), and underscored the need for the mechanism dealing with the question of Palestine established by the General Assembly to continue to function effectively.

At that meeting they also called on Israel to refrain from establishing any settlements in the Holy City of Jerusalem and from undertaking any other geographic of demographic changes there. Israel was also called upon to comply with the agreements and commitments relating to the preservation of Palestinian institutions and Islamic and Christian holy places in the city of Jerusalem, in keeping with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

My delegation wishes to express its thanks to the parties for their tremendous efforts in the Middle East peace process. We also wish to express our respect for their positions on the various issues. We agree that direct talks are the best way to secure independence and self-determination for the Palestinian people and to secure peace for all in the region. This is precisely why we think that the position adopted by one of the parties at this juncture should not prevail over the essential interest of maintaining trust so that the negotiation process can continue to bear fruit.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to express my gratitude for the convening of this resumed session of the General Assembly, where the international community has a chance not to be censored and where it can at least voice its opinion in the form of a resolution on the latest act of lawlessness by Israel without being silenced or rendered ineffective by a single member.

Last week the Security Council failed to adopt a mild draft resolution calling on Israel to refrain from settlement activities in East Jerusalem. The Council failed to adopt that less than ideal draft resolution not because any of the Council members expressed support for the Israeli decision to build new settlements in East Jerusalem, nor because they and other members of the Organization did not disapprove of, condemn, express dissatisfaction with or criticize the Israeli decision. In fact, 49 speakers addressed the Security Council on the issue. All disapproved of the Israeli decision, and many characterized it as only one instance of an overall Israeli plan to create a *fait accompli* and ensure the Judaization of Jerusalem.

The Council failed to adopt the draft resolution because a permanent member placed itself above and beyond the wishes of the international community as reflected by 48 of the statements made in the Council and the 14 votes cast in favour of the draft resolution. The statements in the General Assembly are another index of the views of the general membership of the Organization and of the isolation of the decision to veto the draft resolution in the Council.

The historical rights and sentiments of the Palestinian people and the sacredness which Jerusalem embodies for more than a billion Muslims throughout the world aside, the Israeli decision to build new settlements in East Jerusalem has raised international outrage among traditional supporters of Israel to such an extent that even

the permanent member that, in practice, vetoed the resolution could not but concede, if only verbally.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the least surprised by the double talk. However, we found the new twist in this exercise of veto quite disturbing for the relevance and credibility of the Organization as a whole. More disturbing than the veto itself is the premise upon which it was supposedly based: that the United Nations is not an appropriate forum to address the issue at hand. To quote the official position of the United States,

> "We've had a consistent position that we can never achieve peace through United Nations Security Council resolutions." (*The New York Times, "Mideast Veto Was Justified, Clinton says", 11 March 1997, sect. A, p. 6*)

I have news for them. The United Nations is relevant because it was founded for the very purpose of maintaining international peace and security, for preventing and removing threats to peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of peace. The general membership of the Organization has delegated the task of the maintenance and restoration of international peace and security to the Security Council of the United Nations in a fiduciary sense.

The blatant disregard for Islamic history and the Palestinian heritage in Jerusalem — which in and of itself could have dangerous repercussions on the ground — and the total disregard for the international outrage over the Israeli decision to build new settlements in East Jerusalem, which are manifested in the veto of the draft resolution last Friday, are clearly a misuse of that fiduciary trust in the Security Council, at least as far as the permanent member that vetoed the resolution is concerned.

We believe that it is in this context that the General Assembly is addressing the question of Israeli intransigence. My delegation is confident that the General Assembly will — of course, within the structural constraints of the Organization — reflect the gravity of the issue for international peace and security and convey to the Security Council the message that it must, as a matter of principle, muster the necessary courage to shoulder its Charter responsibility.

Land-grabbing and the building of new housing projects through the use of brute force, intimidation, deceit and mere trickery in order to change the basic characteristics of the Palestinian territories have always been integral components of the Zionists' grand design to plant themselves in Palestine and perpetuate their occupation. However, the recent decision to build new Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem, particularly at this juncture, has taken that unholy policy a few steps forward. It has presented those who have put their faith and hope in Israeli peace overtures with yet another example of the inherent untrustworthiness of Zionist conduct.

The religious value and critical importance which the Palestinian people and Muslims as a whole attach to the holy city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif are no secret to anybody here or to the world at large. Let us confirm this reality and send a clear message — not that the debate and votes in the Security Council last Friday were not clear enough — that the recent decision to build new Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem must be rescinded.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The General Assembly's convening today of an urgent meeting following the formal meeting of the Security Council last week has fully demonstrated the earnest and strong concern of the international community over the recent decision of the Israeli Government to build Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem.

The Chinese delegation expresses its grave concern over this move by the Israeli Government. We are of the view that it is bound to set serious obstacles in the way of the Palestine-Israel peace process and to harm the Middle East peace process as a whole. We urge Israel to call off its plan to build Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem.

The Palestinian question is at the core of the Middle East question. An early, fair, reasonable and lasting solution to this question and the restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people are the keys to peace, stability and development in the Middle East. The question of Jerusalem should be settled by the parties concerned through negotiations on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions. Given that final status negotiations are imminent, the parties concerned should avoid any unilateral move contrary to this approach, since it would only further complicate the question instead of contributing to its proper settlement or to the Middle East peace process.

The Chinese Government has always supported the Middle East peace process and stood for a political settlement of the Middle East question on the basis of

therelevant United Nations resolutions and the principle of land for peace. The results so far achieved in the peace process in the Middle East have not been come by easily and should therefore be cherished by the parties concerned. We hope that the parties concerned will avoid making any move that might aggravate the conflict and undermine the Middle East peace process, and that they will instead encourage all positive efforts to ease tensions, thereby creating a favourable atmosphere for the further advancement of the Middle East peace process.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.92

General Assembly
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Official Records

92nd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 12 March 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 33 and 35 *(continued)*

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Only a few days ago the international community, and especially the peoples of the Middle East, appealed once again to the United Nations Security Council to shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and take appropriate measures so that Israel would reverse its decision to build new settlements in the district of Jabal Abu Ghneim, south of Jerusalem. It was hoped that the Security Council would categorically reaffirm that the acquisition of land by force is illegal and that the building of new settlements is inadmissible, and that it would ask the Israeli Government to refrain from any act of provocation that could imperil the peace process and the security of the region.

Contrary to the will of the international community, the Security Council once again decided on total impunity for the actions of the occupying Power. The United States of America, exercising the anachronistic and undemocratic right of veto, revealed once again the increasing lack of credibility, the ineffectiveness and the double standards of the organ to which the founders of the United Nations assigned the principal responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The United States Government decided to veto the draft resolution, thus reaffirming its unconditional support for the aggressive and hostile policy of the Israeli Government. This came in open contradiction of the United States of America's usual rhetorical posturing as a guardian of international peace and security, which it often uses as a pretext for interfering in the internal affairs of States or for undermining their sovereignty.

The United States has tried to persuade world public opinion and the peoples of the Middle East that the balance and credibility of the peace process in the region would be affected by the Security Council's adoption of a draft resolution of that type, or of any type, in order to justify its veto of a draft resolution that merely called upon Israel to refrain from any action or measure that altered the facts on the ground, not to prejudge the final status negotiations and to avoid actions that would adversely affect the peace process.

This is obviously a matter of illegitimate interests, not of principles.

Those who, over the space of less than two years, have vetoed two draft resolutions in the Security Council on the situation in the occupied Arab territories cannot hide the fact that the decision taken by Israel on 26 February 1997 constitutes a flagrant violation of the basic principles of the Middle East peace process, of international law and of the most basic norms of international humanitarian law, including those enshrined in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and in The Hague Rules of 1907.

97-85248 (E)

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Israel's aggressive policy towards the occupied Arab territories also constitutes a violation of the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly on the situation in the occupied Arab territories and the question of Palestine. The applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, has been upheld in 24 Security Council resolutions. The fact that the Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories constitute a violation has been referred to in a number of Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 446 (1979), 452 (1979) and 465 (1980). It has been clearly recognized in relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 252 (1968), 271 (1969), 298 (1971), 478 (1980) and 672 (1990), that any action or measure taken by Israel to alter the legal status or demographic composition of the city of Jerusalem is legally null and void.

All these truths cannot be ignored. In truth, this is a matter of legitimate principles, not of interests.

Cuba adds its voice to the international community's condemnation of this new Israeli aggression against the people of Palestine and against occupied Jerusalem. Cuba supports the just position of the Arab States in the face of the Israeli actions in violation of the Madrid and Hebron agreements, actions that imperil the future of the peace process in the Middle East.

Cuba hopes that the General Assembly, the only universal body of this Organization and its highest forum, with the transparency and responsibility required for the maintenance of international peace and security and the peace process in the Middle East, will take a firm stance and give the appropriate response that the Security Council was unable to give.

Cuba hopes that the General Assembly will assert the will of the international community against the undemocratic right of veto and its arbitrary use.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The world is following with deep concern the developments in the Middle East, where the peace process, which had offered hope for the resolution of the Palestinian question and for peace in the region, has again been faced with difficulties.

Recently the Israeli Government approved the building of a new Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem, just before the final stage of the peace talks between Palestine and Israel to define the status of Jerusalem.

This decision reveals Israel's ulterior intention to occupy East Jerusalem indefinitely, as it is aimed at altering the status of Jerusalem. The Israeli Government's decision shows why peace in the Middle East could not be achieved up to now in spite of the just struggle of the Arab nations and the sincere support of the peace-loving peoples of the world for scores of years.

The Israeli Government's settlement policy is illegal in the light of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. It is one of the main obstacles to the Middle East peace process.

As we all know very well, the history of mankind teaches that there is no peace in occupied territories. However, the Prime Minister of Israel said that the building of the Jewish settlement is not aimed at killing the peace process but at reviving it. This statement of the Israeli Prime Minister greatly disappoints the peoples of the world who earnestly wish for peace and stability in the region.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea expresses deep concern over the recent developments in the Middle East and takes this opportunity to reiterate that peace in the Middle East should be achieved through dialogue and negotiations rather than conflict.

It is clear to everybody that the purpose of the Israeli Government's decision is to occupy East Jerusalem indefinitely. This decision is another challenge that lays a new obstacle for the Middle East peace process.

Israel should immediately stop unjustifiable acts which delay and endanger the Middle East peace process. It should pay due attention to the just demands of the Arab countries.

The Middle East issue should be solved in a fair and comprehensive manner on the basis of the principle of land for peace and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Their right to establish an independent State should be restored, and Israel should withdraw from all the occupied Arab lands.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will follow with keen interest the developments in Middle East, and in the future it will also extend support to and act in solidarity with the Arab nations in their just cause, standing firmly at their side.

Mr. Butler (Australia): In the Security Council on 27 September 1996, Australia's Foreign Minister, Mr. Alexander Downer, said

> "Peace must be pursued with vigour and must be accompanied by serious attempts to eliminate fundamental sources of injustice and to spread the message of tolerance." *(S/PV.3698 (Resumption 1), p. 15)*

He urged the parties to the dispute to honour the obligations and commitments they had made and to commit themselves to the search for a peaceful resolution of their differences.

Australia is encouraged that the terrible violence which generated the debate at that time has diminished, and in January we joined the rest of the international community in welcoming the Hebron agreement as an important step forward on the path to peace.

Australia is now deeply concerned that the situation in the region again has the potential to lead to a further outbreak of violence and to undermine the trust and confidence necessary for successful continuation of the peace talks.

Australia is following closely the situation in the Middle East. Australia's Deputy Prime Minister, The Honourable Tim Fischer, M.P., is currently in the region having a range of discussions at the highest levels on recent developments and on the prospects for the peace process.

Australia is concerned about Israel's decision to build on Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim. The decision is inconsistent with the body of Security Council resolutions on the Middle East. It is unhelpful. It complicates the process of achieving a peaceful settlement. Both sides should avoid actions which would jeopardize that.

Australia's support for the Madrid process has been strong and consistent because we consider that it offers the best prospect for the achievement of a just and secure peace in the Middle East. Australia supports a settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principle of land for peace, the Oslo Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, concluded between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993 and the Madrid process.

Australia's support for Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized borders has also been strong and consistent. We also support the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, and we acknowledge that the question of Palestinian self-determination and the ultimate shape of the Palestinian entity, including the possibility of an independent State, is subject to the final status negotiations between the parties.

In order to ensure that those negotiations proceed as rapidly and as smoothly as possible, neither party should take action which presumes their outcome. Australia therefore calls on the Government of Israel to consider again its decision to build on Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Just a few days ago the Russian delegation had a chance to set forth in the Security Council its views on the situation that has been created by the Israeli Government's decision to proceed with construction of a new neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. Discussions of this matter, in which an unprecedentedly large number of delegations have wished to participate, have shown virtually unanimous opposition on the part of the international community to this step taken by Israel, on the grounds that it contradicts the spirit and the letter of the Middle East peace process launched in Madrid.

From the General Assembly rostrum today we would like to reiterate our disagreement with the inconsiderate and untimely action taken by Israel. That unilateral step violates the norms of international law and runs counter to the Palestinian-Israeli agreements that have been reached, since it is intended to change the demographic composition of East Jerusalem in favour of the Israeli population and thereby consolidate the policy of fait accompli in the Holy City. In the context of such actions, we disagree in principle with arguments that these problems should be addressed on a bilateral Israeli-Palestinian basis. Such arguments could be warranted if Israel followed this principle itself. Its unilateral actions, however, are taken outside the framework of bilateral talks with the Palestinians. In fact, these actions predetermine any negotiated solutions to these issues at the final status talks, the agenda for which includes the status of Jerusalem and the fate of settlements. The Israeli actions are at variance with the course set for the peace process by the Madrid Conference, since they effectively rule out a negotiated search for compromise on the issue of Jerusalem.

Israel's decision has been condemned by the Palestinians, by the Arab and Islamic worlds, and by the international community as a whole. Regrettably, this

decision was adopted against the backdrop of the recently reached agreement on Hebron, which had cleared a road to progress on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

A co-sponsor of the peace process, Russia is willing to make every effort to avoid a reversal in the Middle East settlement process and to contribute to the resumption of talks in a constructive spirit. According to the letter of the Madrid formula, these talks must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as on the Palestinian-Israeli agreements already reached. Therefore, the principles set down in these, including the inadmissibility of the acquisition of foreign territory by force, are applicable not only to the current situation but also to a further solution of the East Jerusalem problem. In that connection, the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and statehood — something we would like to stress particularly — can be realized only on a basis of mutual acceptability and within the framework of the current peace process.

The topic of Israeli settlements was discussed in Moscow during a recent visit by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. We call upon the Israeli Government to reconsider its decisions in order to ensure progress in the peace process in the interests of both Israel and its Arab neighbours.

Both parties should avoid old habits of confrontation in Palestinian-Israeli relations.

Breaking the deadlock in the problem of new Israeli neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem would contribute to the early launching and the constructive holding, in compliance with an agreed time-frame, of substantive talks on the issues of the second stage of the Palestinian-Israeli settlement, and would also stimulate an intensification of work on all the negotiating tracks.

The Russian delegation regrets to note that, owing to the position of one of the members of the Security Council, the Council failed to adopt a draft resolution on the issue of East Jerusalem which, in our view, reflected in an objective manner the views of virtually every participant in the open formal discussion in the Council.

We viewed with understanding a request by the Group of Arab States to continue the discussion of this issue in the General Assembly. We hope that the Assembly's decision will encourage a settlement of the situation in East Jerusalem and a continuation of the peace process in the Middle East.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): We are meeting today at a particularly critical juncture in the history of Middle East. It is with a sense of utmost concern that the Government of Pakistan views the recent decision by Israel to build a new settlement consisting of 6,500 housing units in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area of East Jerusalem. Israel has also continued to keep open the tunnel extending under the Western Wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque — Al-Haram Al-Sharif. We have also been equally disturbed to learn that Israel has continued to isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank by declaring it off limits to Palestinians and withdrawing residence permits for the city's original Arab inhabitants. Pakistan strongly condemns all these actions, which constitute a blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, the Declaration of Principles and subsequent agreements and accords concluded between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

The complete details of these measures as well as their alarming consequences for the Palestinian people and their economy have already been described by Ambassador Nasser Al-Kidwa, the Permanent Observer of Palestine. These measures are also particularly disturbing as they seriously undermine the peace process, which had been arrived at through bold and courageous initiatives taken earlier.

The special significance of the holy city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif for the international community in general and the Islamic *ummah* in particular requires no elaboration. Israeli measures, which are aimed at altering the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem, are illegal and invalid since they are contrary to the principles enshrined in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), notably the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. Moreover, these measures prejudge the final status negotiations and could lead to the reversal of the peace process.

Provocative Israeli actions have also once again shattered the hope that the peace process would lead to the early exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination through the establishment of an independent homeland. This required the complete withdrawal by the Israeli authorities from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including the holy city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Pakistan's support for the just struggle for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people is well known. We have consistently stated that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978)

continue to provide a viable and just framework for a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

It is incumbent upon the international community at this critical juncture to salvage the Middle East region from the atmosphere of conflict and war. It must encourage the forces of moderation, dialogue and compromise. It is obvious that for the Middle East to be allowed to plunge into a new vicious cycle of violence and chaos would be a serious threat to international peace and security. We fully share the expectation of the international community that there should be no attempt to derail the implementation of the agreements and accords. The provisions of these agreements and accords must be sincerely complied with both in letter and in spirit. We hope that the Israeli leadership will concede to the realities on ground and resolve all pending issues with the Palestinian National Authority, including the immediate reversal of their alarming actions. We strongly urge the demonstration of the requisite flexibility and accommodation as well as a sincere commitment to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that will ensure security and stability for all in the Middle East.

The draft resolution to come before the Assembly will embody the principles which constitute the minimum that must be accomplished by the Israeli authorities. Pakistan will be among the sponsors of the draft resolution and earnestly hopes that all Member States will support its adoption without a vote.

Mr. Biegman (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries have aligned themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Iceland and Liechtenstein have also aligned themselves with it.

The European Union believes that there is no alternative to the peace process, to which we remain deeply committed.

In the interest of the peace process, the European Union calls upon all parties to observe the utmost restraint regarding issues that could prejudge the outcome of the final status negotiations. We therefore greatly regret actions taken by the Government of Israel such as the annexation of land, the demolition of houses, new settlement construction and the expansion of settlements. The European Union expresses its hope that both parties proceed to serious and substantial talks on the permanent status questions, which are due to begin on 17 March.

The European Union recalls that East Jerusalem is subject to the principles set out in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), notably the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and is therefore not under Israeli sovereignty. The European Union considers that the fourth Geneva Convention is fully applicable to East Jerusalem, as it is to other territories under occupation.

Accordingly, as we stated in the debate in the Security Council on 6 March, the European Union deeply deplores the decision of the Israeli Government to approve construction plans for Jabal Abu Ghneim/Har Homa on the West Bank in the Jerusalem area. This poses a threat to the positive developments that have taken place, marked by the agreement reached on the redeployment of Israeli troops from Hebron. The European Union has repeatedly stated that settlements in the occupied territories contravene international law and pose a major obstacle to peace. That is why the members of the European Union have decided to add their names to the list of sponsors of the draft resolution submitted at this meeting. We call on both parties to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid any possible confrontation.

The European Union has taken note of the decision of the Israeli Cabinet on 6 March concerning the first phase of the further redeployments We reaffirm that the redeployment must be credible in terms of territory handed over to the Palestinian Authority. To do otherwise might have serious implications for the peace process.

The European Union remains firmly of the view that the peace process is the only path to security and peace for the Palestinians as well as for Israel and the neighbouring States. We consider it essential at this juncture to reclaim the spirit of the Madrid and Oslo agreements, and we urge all parties to implement these agreements fully. There can be no alternative to a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Palestinian question and to the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole. Any such settlement must have as its basis Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and fall within the framework of international law.

We reiterate in this regard the key principles of self-determination for the Palestinians, with all that that implies, and of land for peace. The European Union

confirms its attachment to such a solution. It stands ready to participate and assist in every way possible in order to achieve this long-awaited objective.

Ms. Tan (Singapore): The Israeli Government's decision to proceed with the construction of an Israeli settlement in East Jerusalem could have the effect of undermining the spirit of trust and cooperation that is vital to the success of the Middle East peace process. At a time when the peace process has gathered new momentum with the signing of the Hebron Agreement on 17 January 1997 and all concerned parties are working tirelessly to ensure its successful implementation, this decision threatens to unravel the hard work achieved thus far in the peace process.

All Governments have the right to adopt policies that address the housing needs of their populations. Indeed, this is one of the fundamental tasks of any self-respecting government. Israel is entitled to its housing plans to provide for the housing needs of both Jews and Arabs in the country. However, the selection of East Jerusalem as the venue of the housing project is controversial because unilateral steps that can alter the current status of Jerusalem will only complicate the already difficult negotiations. The final status of Jerusalem, a city of sacred importance not only to the Jews but also to the Muslims, is still subject to the outcome of negotiations between the two parties. Singapore therefore urges the Israeli Government to reconsider the housing project in East Jerusalem so that the peace process can continue unimpeded.

Singapore reaffirms its commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict as a significant contribution to strengthening international peace and security, as set out in General Assembly resolution 51/26 of 4 December 1996 on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. We will continue to do our part in supporting efforts to bring about the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine so as to realize the just aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): I am speaking on behalf of the Al-Quds/Jerusalem Committee, which my country chairs.

Today's meeting of the General Assembly on the Israeli decision to establish a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim, south-east of the Holy City of Al-Quds, reflects the international community's deep concern at the fact that these measures could lead to the collapse of the peace process.

The philosophy underlying the Oslo accords presupposes that the parties comply with the agreements strictly entered into and scrupulously implement them. These accords, which undeniably constitute one of the basic elements of the peace process, established two fundamental principles: first, that Jerusalem would be discussed at the end of the process; and secondly, that in the meantime no step would be taken that might prejudge the results of these negotiations.

All of this had been proceeding smoothly until the Israeli Government began to show signs of bad faith, which Arab public opinion interpreted as a desire to call into question the issue of peace in the Middle East.

The international community also took a negative view. Throughout the world, from east to west and north to south, people everywhere blamed Israel, calling it to reason and to comply with the agreements — agreements that, as everyone knows, were born of a painful process, leaving no room for mistakes or uncertainties.

It was decided in these agreements to leave the question of Jerusalem until the end, because it concerns not only Palestinians and Israelis but also Muslims and Jews; and where religion is concerned, everyone has equal rights.

The decision was made not to deal with Jerusalem until the end of the negotiations because the issue is a very sensitive and delicate one. All of these precautions were taken at a time when the process was characterized by optimism — when in spite of the understandable pressures and setbacks in the process, good faith was the order of the day and everyone understood the paramount importance of its application.

What has happened now? The most critical and the most optimistic observers alike have agreed to denounce the actions of the Government of Israel, which has deliberately decided to leave the road to peace in order to follow other routes that will lead us away from the objectives of peace to which all have agreed.

We decidedly deplore this turn of events because our country has unambiguously and forthrightly made a commitment to peace, just as it made a commitment to participating with Israel in the development of the Middle East on the basis of frank and faithful cooperation between all the parties.

Perhaps it is unnecessary to recall the credit that Israel reaped in the months following the signing of the peace agreements. That country renewed relations with many countries and undeniably gained more trust than it had ever enjoyed before. All of this is now going up in smoke, and even peace with Syria and Lebanon has become illusory.

What has happened in recent months, and particularly since the decision taken by the Government of Israel to establish a new settlement in south-eastern Jerusalem, has done enormous harm to this peace, to the prospects for development, to Israel and to the confidence that the entire world had begun to place in a country that had finally begun to build momentum by recognizing the existence of the Palestinian people and its right to self-determination and to the creation of a State on its own territory.

The Israeli decision to establish a new settlement in the Holy City of Al-Quds contravenes Security Council resolutions and international law, which ban the alteration of the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem. It is a challenge that the international community must face in one way or another.

Those who believed in the peace of September 1993 are now wondering what could have happened to allow responsible Governments to jeopardize this work that was carried out through so many efforts and so much sacrifice.

The international community is duty-bound to prevent any measure that might arouse such feelings, starting with the decision to establish these new settlements. The mobilization of the international community is a way to show solidarity with the Palestinian people, and Israel should not be allowed to forget its historical responsibilities to bring the process to a conclusion without evasions or delay.

Many countries, such as my own, continue to hope, after all this, that Israel will re-embark upon the course of peace, the only one that can lead to peace of mind for its people and the peoples of the entire region. May the message of today's gathering be heard loud and clear as the world's appeal to Israel to realize that no more time must be wasted.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): First of all, on behalf of the delegation of Viet Nam, I would like to join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for resuming the fifty-first session of the General Assembly to consider agenda items 33 and 35.

The Government of Viet Nam has been following closely the evolution of the peace process in the Middle East, particularly the question of Palestine. We have wholeheartedly supported the Middle East Peace process and have rejoiced at its hard-won achievements. We have welcomed the most significant progress that has been recorded during the last few years, including the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in September 1993, the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in September 1995, the successful holding on 20 January 1996 of the First Palestinian general elections for the Legislative Council and the presidency of the Palestinian National Authority. Particularly, we welcome the recent signing on 17 January 1997 of the Hebron protocol, which has led to the redeployment of Israeli forces from most parts of Hebron as a positive step towards the full realization of the long-awaited comprehensive and just settlement in the region.

While the peace process was slowly easing its way forward, negative incidents occurred and created a major obstacle to peace in the region. We would like to express our deep concern over the 26 February decision to begin construction of new housing in Jabal Abu Ghneim/Har Homa in the southern part of East Jerusalem and other recent measures that encourage and facilitate new settlement activities.

We fully support the Palestinians' position concerning Jerusalem. We also reaffirm the legal status of Jerusalem and, most notably, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and reiterate that there will be no peace in the region without the attainment of Palestinian and Arab rights in that Holy City.

Regarding the settlement issue, we believe that such settlements are not only illegal but also a violation of international law, United Nations Security Council resolutions and the agreements already reached between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. We strongly reiterate that unilateral steps which are not in conformity with the agreements already signed hinder the peace process and must be immediately stopped. In this regard, we share the hope of the international community that all parties concerned will honour their commitments, show good faith and refrain from taking any further measure that could undermine the peace process.

In encouraging all parties concerned to continue their efforts aimed at reaching a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region, we urge them to continue their

negotiations within the Middle East peace process on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the timely implementation of the agreements already reached.

As it has already stated on various occasions, my delegation believes that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine in order to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement which will ensure the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and statehood.

Mr. Ayewah (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation associates itself with the sentiments expressed by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the African Group in respect of the three great leaders who recently passed on.

Mr. Martinez Blanco (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My delegation has continued to follow with keen interest developments in the Middle East, particularly in relation to the question of the occupied territories and the recent decision of the Israeli Government to undertake the construction of new housing units for Jewish settlers in the Jabal Abu Ghneim/Har Homa area of East Jerusalem. Of course, we note that this is only the latest in a series of measures taken and policies adopted by the Israeli Government concerning the occupied territories, all of which are aimed at presenting the Palestinians with a fait accompli. Not only are these policies unhelpful to the peace process, but they contravene relevant Security Council resolutions and Israeli obligations under article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The only bright spot in the peace process during the last 12 months was the agreement concerning Israeli troop withdrawals from Hebron. We had hoped that it would mark a welcome turning point for the peace process after the deadly blows that were inflicted upon it throughout 1996. While we have never been under any illusion that the peace process was going to be hitch-free, we were until recently genuinely encouraged by the positive developments that had taken place since Madrid and had let ourselves begin to hope that peace and stability in the region were finally within reach.

My delegation very much understands the Israeli attachment to the city of Jerusalem. By the same token, we believe that the Government and people of Israel should recognize that the Palestinians and others feel equally strongly about the city. In fact, that was what informed the wise decision taken in Oslo to defer discussions on the sensitive subject until the last stage of the negotiations. And precisely to ensure that these negotiations would take place in good faith and on the basis of the spirit of give and take, it was also decided in Oslo that the parties should refrain from taking any actions which sought to change the status quo. The recent step taken by Israel can only prejudice the outcome of those negotiations.

We were struck by the consensus and almost total unanimity that characterized the debate in the Security Council on this subject last week. A majority of delegations condemned the Israeli decision and all except Israel were agreed that it would negatively impact on the peace process. It was therefore a matter of regret for my Government that the Security Council was prevented from exercising its Charter responsibilities. This not only damages the credibility of the Council, but makes the search for peace more difficult. That is why my delegation is contributing to the debate we are having today in the General Assembly and supports the sentiments that have been expressed during this debate.

On the basis of the foregoing, we hope that the Israeli Government will reconsider its position and decide against going ahead with the construction. It is the only way to give new impetus to the peace process and ultimately to ensure long-term peace and security for the region.

Mr. Shah (India): It is ironic yet significant that we are once again meeting — for all practical purposes in an emergency session of the General Assembly — to act on an issue pertaining to the Middle East after the Security Council has been unable to act in the matter. We faced a similar situation last year in April on the question of Lebanon and the General Assembly had to act. Once again, this demonstrates the importance of speedy action on strengthening the General Assembly and democratizing the Security Council.

The international community has wholeheartedly supported the peace process in the Middle East. We were heartened by the recent agreement on Hebron and had hoped that the peace process was once again firmly back on track. However, the recent Israeli Government approval for construction of the settlements at Jabal Abu Ghneim, to the south of East Jerusalem, has caused us deep concern. India has consistently maintained, and continues to do so, that unilateral steps which are not in conformity with past agreements and understandings would hinder the Middle East peace process and vitiate

the atmosphere for building the mutual confidence essential for the peace negotiations to progress.

India remains convinced of the need for purposeful negotiations on all issues in the final status negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. We have repeatedly urged all parties concerned to intensify their efforts towards finding a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region and we continue to do so. This would enable the achievement of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and of all States within internationally recognized boundaries.

India's bonds of friendship with the Palestinian people are deep and abiding. India continues to believe that the question of Palestine remains at the core of the Arab-Israeli problem. In this context, India has extended unqualified support to the Middle East peace process on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): The request to hold this urgent session of the General Assembly on the situation in the Middle East affirms, among other things, the serious concern of the international community about that situation.

The Namibian people, having travelled the road of occupation, cannot but associate themselves with the fate of the Palestinian people and have always expressed their solidarity with their just cause.

The Palestinian peace accord and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority had given hope for lasting peace in the Middle East. We can still remember the jubilance which met the deployment of the Palestinian Police Force in the West Bank. Furthermore, the signing of the Hebron protocol was a welcome building-block in the early achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. We had begun to visualize, among other things, a peaceful and secure childhood for the Palestinian children. However, recent developments have dampened our hopes.

In October last year, from this very rostrum, Namibia, speaking on the Middle East situation, reiterated that the first step towards consolidating the Middle East peace process is the immediate cessation of the creation new settlements and the termination of the reconstruction work in the old city of Jerusalem. These views were as valid then as they are now.

The decision by the Israeli Government to build a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem cannot serve to extend the progress achieved so far. The intention of the Israeli authorities to implement measures to isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory will further complicate the peace process. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to send a clear and unified message to the Israeli Government to, *inter alia*, cease establishing new settlements. The adoption of a draft resolution by the General Assembly towards that end is therefore warranted.

It is the view of the Government of the Republic of Namibia that the supporters of the peace process should contribute towards the restoration of partnership for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in the best interest of all parties in the Middle East. In particular, supporters should promote the exercise of self-determination by the Palestinians and the establishment of an independent state of their own. Just as the best interests of both parties should be taken into account, so both parties should honour in full this commitment to the realization of peace.

The international community cannot abandon the Palestinian people. So much blood has been shed for peace in the Middle East; What is needed is not further bloodshed, but rather the continuation of negotiations in the interest of peace and the implementation of the agreements reached. This Assembly has a role to play in the achievement of that end. We owe it to those who have sacrificed their lives for peace in the Middle East, to future generations and to the world at large.

The seeds of peace can be watered only by policies that enhance the spirit and logic of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 1993. The peace process cannot coexist with the extension of occupation, for the two are totally incompatible.

Historical experiences in southern Africa, among other places, have shown that it is possible for yesterday's antagonists to coexist peacefully today. That can be achieved only if both parties — not one — fully work towards that goal.

Together we have a responsibility to ensure that real peace in the Middle East is achieved and an independent Palestinian State is established.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation is participating in this meeting of the General Assembly in the hope of helping to restore the language of conciliation of the Middle East peace process begun at the Madrid Conference in 1991.

We believe it is imperative that the parties not stray from that process, and we are concerned by destabilizing events that do not contribute to reaffirming efforts for peace and strengthening both sides' confidence in those efforts.

As our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alvaro Ramos, said earlier in the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, the international community must continue to encourage direct dialogue between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the Arab countries in order to support mutual recognition and faithfulness to the ultimate objective of a firm and lasting peace in the Middle East. Accordingly, we appeal unconditionally to the parties to refrain from taking any decisions that might affect the confidence that should be guiding all parties.

This is why we believe it is inappropriate for a decision to be taken to build new settlements in East Jerusalem, because this imperils the climate of understanding necessary for peace.

Uruguay urges the parties to resume dialogue and fulfil their existing commitments under legal agreements approved and guaranteed by the international community in order to resolve their differences along the way to firm and lasting peace in the region.

Because so many lives have been sacrificed to the cause of a just and lasting solution reached by peaceful means, we must act more forcefully, though also more cautiously. We will do all we can to make sure that events do not lead to acts of violence, which, unfortunately, in the past have hampered efforts to achieve harmonious coexistence in the region.

Mr. Jonah (Sierra Leone): Sierra Leone feels obliged to intervene in this discussion to underscore its concern about recent developments and also to express its regret that once again the use of the veto in the Security Council has frustrated the will of the international community. In this connection, I wish to state that my country believes that the United Nations has a responsibility in the context of the resolution of the Middle East crisis. I understand those who believe that the parties must continue to deal with each other; we support direct negotiation. But Israeli-Arab relations affect the wider international community. Therefore, the United Nations must be involved.

It is particularly strange to hear what the representative of Israel has said. Without the involvement of the United Nations, Israel would not have existed. So I think this series of meetings in the General Assembly is of the utmost importance.

We all know full well what a sensitive issue Jerusalem is in the Middle East. Therefore, when one side takes unilateral decisions which may affect the outcome of the final status, I think we all must be concerned.

And this is what my Government believes: We cannot accept the action of Israel in this connection, because it destroys the great hope we all felt just a few months ago, that at long last the Middle East was moving towards a lasting solution. We therefore support the attempts now being made to prepare a draft resolution for the General Assembly which would send the message to the Government of Israel that, while we believe that Israel must live within secure borders and in peace with its neighbours, Israel cannot continue to take actions that will make it difficult for us to achieve peace in the Middle East.

I believe also that those Arab States that have stretched out their hands to Israel should not be discouraged by this kind of unilateral action. On this occasion, we want to reaffirm our support for the peace process in Israel and in Arab States; we want to support the concept of direct negotiations; but we will always oppose attempts by one side to preempt the final solution to this crisis.

Mr. Guillén (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Peru enthusiastically sponsored the draft resolution on the Middle East peace process submitted to the General Assembly following the important Oslo accords. We therefore do not consider that either the General Assembly or the United Nations itself is interfering at a time when there is a grave lack of compliance with that process.

We have been following the important process, which must address, *inter alia*, one of the most difficult of problems: the policy of establishing settlements in territories occupied by Israel, which following the 1967 conflict were to be returned in exchange for peace and recognized boundaries. We fear a breakdown of the wise agreement to halt the building of new settlements, which

basically constitutes a whole new expansion policy. We had hoped for the full implementation of the 17 January protocol on Hebron.

We consider that the construction in Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem — the capital whose status is one of the most sensitive questions and hence one of the matters to be considered at the end of the negotiating process — is a fresh challenge to the peace process itself, and a violation of international agreements and the norms of international law.

Forty-nine representatives spoke in the Security Council, a vast majority of them calling for a halt to this act, which is imperiling the peace process, a process that is already impeded by a change of policy in Israel. Fourteen votes were cast in favour of the draft resolution submitted by a group of Western countries; this constitutes an appeal that must be heeded.

As we make our statements in this most representative of international forums — statements that are directed towards safeguarding security — and at a time when the Palestinian Authority has extended invitations to an important meeting in Gaza on Saturday, it is, in our view, very important that peace be strictly respected so as not to give any excuse for pursuing a policy of force.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): Earlier in this session of the General Assembly, my President, His Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa, expressed our earnest hope for the implementation of the peace accords on the situation in the Middle East. It was in this light, and with a sense of immense promise, that the United Republic of Tanzania welcomed the agreement signed between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Government of Israel on 17 January 1997, on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Hebron.

It is therefore with a sense of deep concern and regret that this meeting of the General Assembly has been convened, not to renew its confidence in the ongoing peace process in the Middle East but to address what for the time being must be seen as a serious threat to the process.

Only last September the Security Council met to discuss the situation in the occupied Arab territories. As a result, the Council adopted its resolution 1073 (1996), in which it called for the immediate cessation by Israel of all acts which had resulted in the aggravation of the situation in the areas and which potentially had negative implications for the Middle East peace process. The United Republic of Tanzania followed developments in the region with an optimism which, we believed, had been rewarded by the Hebron agreement.

It is in this context and with this background that the recent decision by the Government of Israel to build new housing units in East Jerusalem raises concerns of a fundamental nature. While the Hebron agreement expanded our hopes in the momentum for peace and stability in the region, the new decision confronts us with our worst fears, as it injects new tensions on the ground and seeks to undermine the trust which must exist between the parties if any meaningful process is to be sustained. In our view, the decision by the Government of Israel must be condemned for what it is: Israel's reneging on its commitment to the peace process in the Middle East.

The status of East Jerusalem remains subject to the principles set out in Security Council resolution 242 (1967). Until the parties come to an agreement, the context of Security Council resolution 1073 (1996) must also be seen as invalidating any attempt to acquire territory by force or by any other subtle means. One cannot therefore dismiss the Israeli decision as inconsequential. It can potentially, and profoundly, alter the dynamics of the peace process in the region. It is our view that this development is not to the advantage of the international community — much less to that of the parties themselves.

Since the PLO and the Government of Israel have agreed to negotiate the status of the occupied territories, it is a reflection of bad faith if unilateral actions are allowed to subvert that understanding. This would also constitute an irreparable erosion of the necessary confidence the parties must have for each other to sustain the negotiations. The United Republic of Tanzania therefore joins with those who have called on the Government of Israel to reconsider its decision and remedy the situation.

The Government of Israel has taken the position that the General Assembly and this Organization itself are not the appropriate forums to deal with issues concerning Israel and Palestine. We accept that disputes are best settled between the parties concerned. We believe, however, that this Organization and its Member States have made a considerable contribution to the peace process — and maybe that is an understatement. This is a world forum. It cannot be discounted. Events in the

Middle East have a tremendous bearing on the rest of the world.

It is regrettable that last Friday the Security Council was not able to adopt a resolution characterizing the intended new settlements in East Jerusalem as illegal and a major obstacle to the peace process. However, we take consolation in the fact that the entire Security Council, without exception, agrees that the decision of the Government of Israel is not only unhelpful to the peace process but undermines it. The Assembly, therefore, cannot be seen to condone any actions which might endanger the peace process in the Middle East.

The United Republic of Tanzania continues to express its earnest hope that the Government of Israel will appreciate that it is in the interest of all that it should abandon the decision recently made on the construction of the settlement in East Jerusalem and, instead, expend its energy and resources towards the peace process in which all of us have an interest.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I now call on the Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Ansay (Organization of the Islamic Conference): Mr. President, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Laraki, the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), I thank you for calling on me to address the General Assembly on agenda items 33, "The situation in the Middle East", and 35, "Question of Palestine". In view of the time factor and the fact that the delegations of several member States of the OIC have already spoken on these two agenda items, our intervention today will be brief.

At the outset, let me say, as I said in my statement last week in the Security Council, that I wish I had taken the floor under better, instead of what have become bitter, circumstances. For we in the OIC had joined forces with the international community in supporting the peace process in the Middle East in full measure, despite some of the disadvantageous elements that the relevant agreements contained affecting Palestinian interests. We were even entertaining hopes about the future of peace in the area because of those few achievements that already had emerged during the early stages of the implementation of the Oslo accords. We were gratified last January by the agreement on the redeployment of Israeli troops from Al-Khalil, and we were prepared to continue to lend our full support to the attainment of the agreed goals and objectives of the peace agreements.

Regrettably, our hopes together with those of well-wishers in the international community, have been shattered by the unfortunate turn of events in Palestine, the responsibility for which must lie with Israel and Israel alone. The turmoil has been brought about by a series of violations of various elements of the peace agreements by Israel, and the Israeli decision on 26 February 1997 to build a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem. That decision constitutes the latest attempt by Israel to pre-empt the outcome of the negotiations on the final status by changing the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem — a city that is of central importance to the Arab and Muslim worlds, as it is the first kiblah and the third holiest city of Islam; to the three major religions; and to the international community at large. The Israeli decision not only violates the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, the Declaration of Principles and the subsequent agreements, but threatens to undermine the progress that has been achieved in the Middle East peace process.

In this regard, I would remind delegations that the Islamic Group at the United Nations, at the Council's meeting held on 5 March 1997, had called on the international community, including the Security Council, to take urgent steps to ensure that the Government of Israel reverses its decision and renounces any settlement activity in all the occupied Arab territories, in particular East Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the Council failed to take a position on the issue, necessitating the convening of this meeting of the General Assembly.

In the spirit of our solidarity with the peace process in the Middle East, we reiterate our condemnation of this latest decision by the Israeli Government concerning East Jerusalem, just as we condemned the opening of the tunnel under the western wall of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque.

I should like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the position of the OIC that a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region cannot be achieved without the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which, *inter alia*, emphasize that Jerusalem is part and parcel of the territories occupied since 1967.

In this context we in the OIC have requested the Security Council to implement all of its relevant resolutions, including resolutions 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 465, 476 and 478 (1980), and 1073 (1996), all of which concern Jerusalem; to take all necessary measures to prevent Israel from altering the geographical and demographic status of Jerusalem; and to prevent it from taking any action that in any way affects the status of Jerusalem, the final status of which is to be discussed in the subsequent stages of the peace process.

We urge the General Assembly to play its role and to use its influence to bring an end to the continuation of Israeli expansionism and settlement policies in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including Jerusalem. We appeal to this body to consider all these Israeli policies and practices as violations of all relevant United Nations resolutions, of international agreements, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and of international law, and pronounce itself accordingly.

Through you, Mr. President, we would like also to request the international community to persuade Israel to lift the siege around Jerusalem and to stop the implementation of all decisions and practices that adversely affect the interests of the Palestinian people, especially the confiscation of Palestinian lands, the demolishing of Palestinian properties and houses, and the withdrawal of identity cards issued to Palestinians, designed to expel them from Jerusalem. We also request the international community to prevent Israeli excavations around the Al-Aqsa Mosque and to make Israel cease forthwith the violations of the Islamic and Christian holy places in Jerusalem.

In conclusion, I should like to reassure the General Assembly, through you, Mr. President — as I have done in the Security Council — that as soon as the necessary measures to restore peace and security in the area have been undertaken, improving the environment for the resumption of the peace process, the OIC and its 54 member States, representing the very serious concerns of more than 1 billion Muslims all over the world, will also reaffirm their wholehearted support for the peace process, in fulfilment of their collective desire to see peace and tranquillity return to the area.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to inform members of the Assembly that with regard to agenda items 33 and 35 a draft resolution will be published in provisional form in document A/51/L.68. Delegations may obtain copies of this document at the documents distribution window at 5.15 p.m. today.

The General Assembly will take action on draft resolution A/51/L.68 tomorrow afternoon at 3 p.m.

Organization of work

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In connection with agenda item 21 (b), "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions", I have requested His Excellency Mr. Ernst Sucharipa of Austria, who has ably coordinated the informal consultations during this session on draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 21, to coordinate the consultations on a draft resolution to be submitted to the General Assembly on assistance to Tajikistan.

I should like to inform members that the informal consultations on the draft resolution will be announced in the *Journal*.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.93

General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

Official Records

93rd plenary meeting
Thursday, 13 March 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 33 and 35 *(continued)*

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Draft resolution (A/51/L.68)

The President: I call on the representative of Indonesia to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.68.

Mr. Wisnumurti (Indonesia): I deem it a distinct honour and privilege to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.68 concerning Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular in occupied East Jerusalem.

I am pleased to announce in this connection that the following countries should be added to the list of sponsors of the draft resolution: Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, the Comoros, Guyana, Liechtenstein, the Maldives, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen.

During the past several days, we have heard widespread expressions of the grave concern of the international community over the decision taken by Israel on 26 February 1997 to embark upon new settlement activities in Jabal Abu Ghneim in Jerusalem. Here at the United Nations, such concern has been reflected in the debates heard in the Security Council last week as well as in this forum since yesterday. Speaker after speaker has categorically rejected the Israeli action as constituting a flagrant violations of resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council, and in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968) and 338 (1973), which, *inter alia*, emphasize the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and consider all measures and actions taken by Israel which seek to change the legal status of Jerusalem as invalid. These speakers have also referred to the decision as being in clear breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of other rules of international law. Furthermore, they have consistently taken the position that the decision is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Declaration of Principles and subsequent agreements, not least because it seeks to pre-empt the outcome of permanent status negotiations by changing the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem.

They maintain that Israel's decision violates the atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence required if the peace process is to have a successful outcome. The Assembly has taken up this situation because of the failure of the Security Council to take the necessary measures to address the issue, despite the wishes of the overwhelming majority of its members. It is therefore incumbent upon the General Assembly, which represents the international community, to pronounce itself in no uncertain terms on this question, in keeping with its responsibility under the Charter.

97-85255 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

By the terms of the preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would express its deep concern at Israel's decision to establish new settlements in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area in East Jerusalem. It would also express concern at other measures whose objective is to promote new settlements. It would emphasize the illegality of such settlements, which constitute a major obstacle to peace. In recalling the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council on Jerusalem, the draft resolution would reaffirm that all legislative and administrative measures, as well as actions taken by Israel, which are intended to alter the status of that city, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, are invalid and cannot change that status. It would furthermore reaffirm the General Assembly's support for the ongoing Middle East peace process and the agreements reached, including the recent Agreement on Hebron. The General Assembly would also express its concern about the difficulties facing the Middle East peace process, including their impact on Palestinian living conditions, while urging the parties to fulfil their obligations, including those under the agreements already reached.

Under operative paragraph 1, the General Assembly would call upon the Israeli authorities to refrain from all actions or measures, including settlement activities, which alter the facts on the ground, pre-empt the final status negotiations and have negative implications for the Middle East peace process. Under operative paragraph 2, the Assembly would call upon Israel, the occupying Power, to abide scrupulously by its legal obligations and responsibilities under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, which is applicable to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. Operative paragraph 3 contains a call on all parties to continue, in the interests of peace and security, their negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis and also to continue the timely implementation of the agreements reached. Finally, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Government of Israel the provisions of the resolution.

The sponsors regard the draft resolution as a reasonable, balanced and appropriate response to Israel's decision. It contains provisions whose implementation would make a significant contribution towards reversing the dangerous situation caused by Israel's ill-conceived action. We are convinced that the adoption of this draft resolution would be invaluable in ensuring that the peace process remains on track. Finally, the draft resolution as a whole represents a reaffirmation of the permanent responsibility of the United Nations on the question of Palestine.

For these reasons, the sponsors recommend the adoption of the draft resolution by the Assembly.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/51/L.68.

I shall first call on those representatives who wish to make statements in explanation of vote before the voting.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Peleg (Israel): This draft resolution is one-sided and biased. It singles out Israel and is detrimental to the Middle East peace process.

Today Israel mourns the six schoolgirls and their teacher who were murdered this morning in the Jordan Valley. This terrible crime reinforces our belief that the only way to promote peace in the Middle East, to support the political process and to fight terrorism is through direct talks. This is the only proven method for peacemaking in the Middle East. Needless debates far removed from the realities of the region have never contributed to settling the contentious issues between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

Israel welcomes the positive support of the United Nations for the peace process, as expressed by General Assembly resolution 51/29, entitled "Middle East peace process". International support for the peace process can be useful, but only when it is in concert with the efforts of all the parties involved, with a view towards building a consensus.

It is difficult to comprehend that countries that wish to play a more active role in the Middle East peace process are rushing to support and even sponsor such a blatantly one-sided draft resolution. Their actions are completely incompatible with their wishes.

Israel will therefore vote against this draft resolution, and it calls on Member States that support the peace process in the Middle East to do the same.

Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway): Since the beginning of the peace process in the Middle East, Norway has

attempted to facilitate mutual understanding and cooperation between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders and peoples. Norway therefore remains very concerned regarding the loss of momentum in the peace process shortly before the scheduled resumption of final status negotiations. We voiced this concern in our intervention in the Security Council on 5 March, when we also urged the Israeli Government to reconsider its decision to establish a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim/Har Homa in East Jerusalem. Norway will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

We do, however, believe that it is the duty and responsibility of the parties themselves to solve the current crisis and agree on the outstanding issues. Recently, the parties have demonstrated their commitment to the peace process, particularly with the signing and implementation of the Hebron protocol.

Today, therefore, we again call on the parties to show restraint, to respect and implement both the letter and the spirit of the Oslo agreements and to work together towards a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Norway stands ready, as always, to help them reach this all-important goal.

Mr. Hamdan (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of Lebanon will vote in favour of the draft resolution. The Israeli measure contravenes norms of international law, especially the provision that prohibits the acquisition of land by force. It also violates The Hague Rules of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which prohibit an occupying Power from altering the demographic or physical status of occupied territories.

However, we had hoped that the draft resolution would note explicitly that the Israeli measure also violates the foundations of the peace process under the Madrid formula, which is rooted in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace.

The Government of Israel took its decision to build the new settlement without taking into consideration the demands of the Arab party, even though that party strongly opposed the measure. Israel claims that it took this action in exercise of its sovereign rights. In other words, Israel has refused and continues to refuse to acknowledge that East Jerusalem and the areas surrounding it are occupied territories and hence subject to the provisions of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which the Council adopted following the 1967 war.

We consider that to respond mildly to this Israeli action would, irrespective of any other considerations, have dire consequences for the peace process. It would unquestionably send signals that would encourage extremist policies in Israel, policies that we consider as solely responsible for acts of violence in the region, which claim a daily increasing number of innocent victims.

My delegation views the United Nations as reflecting the collective conscience of the world. The United Nations is the mechanism that protects the defenceless from the oppressor. It is the forum for the consolidation of the norms of international law governing international relations.

We regret that the Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution on this subject owing to the exercise of the veto power by a permanent member. We hope that the General Assembly will adopt a collective position like that manifested during the Security Council debate, in order to make clear its position that this Israeli action is null and void.

Mr. Guillén (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation has repeatedly joined in sponsoring General Assembly draft resolutions on the Middle East peace process. We have always aimed to strengthen the process, and consider that we have the duty to state our position clearly whenever the process encounters obstacles. As the Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution on the present matter, we think it is necessary for us to support the draft resolution before the General Assembly today. We wish to place on record that, for Peru, the peace process should aim at the achievement of a just and lasting peace, with respect for internationally recognized boundaries; international agreements and treaties must be respected.

My delegation said yesterday that it was important and essential to refrain from all violence at this time. We continue to believe firmly that it is important and essential to maintain peace and comply with the norms of law and justice.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting. The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.68, entitled "Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular in occupied East Jerusalem".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of)

The draft resolution was adopted by 130 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions (resolution 51/223).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to make statements in explanation of vote. I wish to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): The United States shares the concerns expressed by many countries during the debate in this Hall on the issue of construction by the Government of Israel in the Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim area of Jerusalem. I believe that the views of the United States are well known in this matter. Let me take this opportunity to restate them.

We believe that the decision of the Government of Israel to commence construction at Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim runs counter to the progress and achievements of the parties to date. We do not believe such activity is helpful to the peace process.

As President Clinton said earlier, we would have preferred that this decision had not been made. It undermines the trust and confidence so badly needed in creating the appropriate environment for successful negotiations, especially on the difficult issues involved in the permanent status talks, such as Jerusalem and settlements.

Let me emphasize this latter point, because it is absolutely critical. To achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East requires an honest negotiating process, one in which the parties do nothing to pre-empt, prejudge or predetermine talks over any of the issues the parties themselves have decided will be addressed in permanent status negotiations. The decision on Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim does just the opposite. We regret that it was taken.

States Members of the United Nations are understandably moved by a desire to express their views on this situation. But we must take great care to respond to developments in a constructive way that will bolster the negotiating process, not limit prospects for the successful conclusion of permanent status talks. We have never believed, despite the useful role the United Nations can play and has played in working for Middle East peace, that it is an appropriate forum for addressing the issues now under negotiation between the parties.

The record of the last few months proves that the parties themselves, working together, can resolve the many outstanding issues now before them. For example,

against long odds and despite considerable political controversy, they succeeded in reaching agreement on Hebron. Israel has announced its first phase of further redeployment from areas of the West Bank. This decision on the first phase represents a serious expansion of Palestinian authority. It is only the first step in a three-phase process, and we hope the Government of Israel will do more in the second and third phases. At the same time, Palestinians and Israelis have agreed to immediate and parallel negotiations on the Gaza airport, safe passage, and other issues.

The General Assembly ought not to interject itself into this process; that can only build mistrust and harden the positions of both sides, while interfering with the progress the parties are making on their own.

Instead, we believe that the international community should reiterate its support for the achievements of the partners today and respect their commitment to work together towards their common goal — a peaceful and prosperous Middle East — without the interference of outside parties.

This is what the General Assembly has done in its annual resolution expressing support for the Middle East peace process, an example of the kind of strong, positive contribution the United Nations can make to peace in the region. The resolution today, however, contradicts this spirit of support and encouragement, inappropriately involves the General Assembly in permanent status issues and makes the work of the negotiating partners that much harder. Consequently, the United States voted against this resolution.

Let me take this opportunity to extend the condolences of my Government to those people in Israel who lost family members in the horrific attack on schoolgirls near the Jordan River today. As Secretary Albright said this morning, the death of children is particularly tragic because it is through the peace process that we are trying to create a better future for them. Violence can never be the answer. It can only produce more victims.

Mr. Camacho Omiste (Bolivia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Bolivia would like to explain its vote on the resolution entitled "Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular in occupied East Jerusalem".

The delegation of Bolivia voted in favour of the resolution considered under General Assembly agenda items 33 and 35, in keeping with the decisions of the United Nations and particularly Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which is based on the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force.

Bolivia's foreign policy is committed to the building of a just and peaceful international society based on friendship and cooperation. In keeping with these principles, Bolivia supports the peace process in the Middle East region.

My Government, in a fraternal spirit, hopes that the parties involved in the process referred to in the resolution just adopted will reach agreements that will accommodate the interests of all concerned and enable a just and lasting peace to be established. To this end, it is essential to create conditions that will engender mutual trust and the right climate for negotiation, on the basis of the agreements reached and the need to find a lasting solution to the most serious problems inherited from the past. International law and negotiation should be the instruments used to ensure that justice prevails once again.

Mr. Fowler (Canada): Canada is deeply saddened and shocked by the attack against innocent Israeli schoolchildren today in Jordan, and we too extend our condolences to their families. Such deplorable acts of violence must not be allowed to derail the peace process. We believe that maintaining the current peace process is essential, and we hope that the parties will resume negotiations shortly towards the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Canada voted in favour of the resolution just adopted. We note, however, that both parties involved in the peace agreements have obligations, and we would have preferred to see that reality reflected more fully in the resolution.

As Canada noted in its 6 March statement before the Security Council, the construction of a lasting peace requires that all parties refrain from unilateral actions that would prejudice the outcome of final status negotiations. In this regard, it is Canada's view that the recent decision of the Government of Israel to proceed with the construction of an Israeli settlement in Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghneim undermines the trust that is the very foundation of the peace process. Canada views settlement activity as a violation of international law and as harmful to the peace process.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It was only natural for my delegation to vote in favour of the resolution just adopted, because Israel's action contravenes international law and violates the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Convention, which prohibit the occupying Power from changing the demographic status of Jerusalem. We would have preferred the resolution to have mentioned that Israel's settlement activities, be they the construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing ones, are null and void, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In this connection, we must express our admiration and appreciation for the European position on these settlements and on the status of Jerusalem. Indeed, the latest European communiqué states that as East Jerusalem is subject to the principles set out in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), notably the inadmissibility of territorial acquisition by force, Jerusalem is not under Israeli sovereignty, but is an occupied Arab territory.

My Government opposes the Israeli settlement activities in Jabal Abu Ghneim, as well as the earlier ones in the West Bank and Golan. It is of the view that the construction of settlements in the occupied territories clearly runs counter to the principles of international law, represents a major obstacle on the road to peace, and could abort that process and favour a return to tension and violence.

The United Nations is the appropriate international forum to consider such important issues; otherwise, why are we here? The fact is that Israel, while advocating peace, has erected successive obstacles in its path. Peace cannot go hand in hand with settlement and violence. If Israel wants peace, it will have to pursue the peace process on the basis of the Madrid principles, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace.

It is unfortunate that the world must send a message that Israel's settlement activities are illegal and undermine the peace process without the adherence of a permanent member that exercised its veto power despite being a sponsor of the peace process and despite having made praiseworthy efforts towards peace over the last five years. This gives Israel a green light to continue its settlement activities. We hope that the United States of America will reconsider its position and move towards progress in the peace process, in view of the historic importance of the international position against the settlements.

Syria aspires to a comprehensive peace based on justice, one that guarantees human dignity and rejects humiliation, settlements and occupation. We want the peace process to resume from the point where the previous Israeli Government left it.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the vote.

I now call on the representative of Mauritania, who wishes to speak on a point of order.

Mr. Ould Sid'Ahmed (Mauritania): For technical reasons, my delegation could not take part in the voting on resolution 51/223, just adopted by the General Assembly. Had it been able to do so it would have voted in favour of the resolution, which my country indeed co-sponsored.

The President: I now call on the representative of Vanuatu, who wishes to speak on a point of order.

Mr. Ravou-Akii (Vanuatu) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation could not participate in the voting for reasons related to Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations, as we have not paid our arrears to the budget of the Organization. Had we been able to vote, we would have supported the resolution, just as we have supported previous resolutions dealing with the Middle East peace process.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 and 43/177 of 15 December 1988, I now call on the Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like to express our deep appreciation to all Member States that voted in favour of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly this afternoon. Their support reflected the almost unanimous support of the international community and the Member States of the United Nations. In the adoption of this resolution, 57 Member States voted in favour of such a resolution for the first time, and we would like to pay special tribute to those States. This resolution was supported by all but two Member States, though two others abstained and a number of Member States could not exercise their right to vote in the General Assembly.

There is therefore a clear, universal position that includes many friends of Israel. This sends a clear,

unmistakable message to all parties. The first element of that message is that Israel should stop its plans to construct the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement and refrain from further settlement activities. The second element is that the United Nations, the General Assembly and the Security Council have a central role to play, in keeping with the responsibilities of the United Nations under the Charter, especially when Israel, a Member State, violates international humanitarian law, relevant United Nations resolutions and the bilateral agreements reached within the framework of the peace process.

We are hopeful that the Government of Israel will fully understand the significance of this message and will indeed refrain from constructing the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement. Regrettably, the Government of Israel announced yesterday that it would go ahead with the construction next week. If this were to happen, it would represent another act of defiance of our collective will and another act of disdain for the position of the international community. It would confirm that Israel is the only State in the world that openly disregards international law and rejects Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

The resolution just adopted by the General Assembly provides us with a new opportunity. We hope that this opportunity will lead to positive results so that we can avert all potential problems and difficulties and go back hand in hand to build up the peace process. However, we must say in no uncertain terms that if Israel turns down this new opportunity and if the construction plans to build the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement are implemented, we will go back once again to the Security Council. We will not disappear or cease to claim our legitimate rights on behalf of our people. The major difference now lies in the fact that this time we are armed with the resolution adopted this afternoon with the almost universal approval of the international community.

We hope that in these circumstances the Security Council would vote unanimously and in so doing fulfil its obligations. That would be our final chance to avert an explosion and provide an opportunity to maintain and preserve the peace process.

I would like to reiterate once again our appreciation to all Member States that voted in favour of the resolution adopted this afternoon, for the just position reflected in it and for all other aspects of support.

In closing, I would like to state that we, too, stand against what happened today in the Jordan Valley. Our political commitments are very clear, but we must all work towards putting an end to all that is negative and harmful in order to build a just peace emanating from the agreements reached on the basis of international law. Let us work together towards building that just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East region.

The President: I call on the representative of the Netherlands on a point of order.

Mr. Biegman (Netherlands): I would not have asked to speak again on behalf of the European Union were it not for the horrific shooting incident that took place today on the border between Israel and Jordan, in which six Israeli schoolgirls and their teacher were killed and another six wounded.

We are shocked and grieved that, once again, innocent civilian lives have fallen victim to senseless violence caused by one misled individual. We extend our most sincere condolences to the bereaved families of the victims as well as to the Government and people of Israel.

The President: I call on the representative of Jordan on a point of order.

Prince Zeid Raid (Jordan): In reference to the events of this morning, I would like to express, on behalf of the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, our deepest sorrow for the terrible tragedy that befell a group of Israeli children along the Jordanian-Israeli border. My Government has deplored unreservedly this criminal act — an act perpetrated by one individual for reasons as yet unknown, but which has shocked and offended the conscience of each and every one of us. The Government of Jordan has, of course, extended its heartfelt condolences to the families of the young victims as well as its wishes to the injured for a speedy recovery.

The President: We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda items 33 and 35.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.94

General Assembly
Fifty-first Session

Official Records

94th plenary meeting
Thursday, 27 March 1997, 3.00 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 119 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (Article 19 of the Charter) (A/51/780/Add.4)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/51/780/Add.4, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communications dated 21 and 30 January and 4 and 12 March 1997, Ecuador and Latvia have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda of the fifty-first regular session of the General Assembly and organization of work

Request for the inclusion of an additional item

Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/237)

The President: In his note contained in document A/51/237, the Secretary-General informs the General Assembly that, pursuant to paragraph 4 of article 13 of the statute of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, the judges shall be elected for a term of four years. By decision 47/328 of 17 September 1993, the judges were elected by the General Assembly for a term of office beginning on 17 November 1993. The term of office of the judges, therefore, expires on 16 November 1997.

It would be advisable for the election of the judges to be held as soon as possible during the current session of the General Assembly.

Accordingly, the Secretary-General has the honour to request, pursuant to rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-first session of an additional item entitled "Election of judges of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991", which is of an important and urgent character.

The Secretary-General further requests that the item be considered directly in plenary meeting.

Unless I hear any objection, may I take it that the General Assembly agrees that the provision of rule 40 of the rules of procedure, which would require a meeting of the General Committee on the question of the inclusion of this item on the agenda, can be waived?

97-85314 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to include an additional item in the agenda of the current session, entitled "Election of judges of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991"?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to consider the additional item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

Request for the reopening of the consideration of agenda item 18 (b) (Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/102/Add.1)

The President: In his note contained in document A/51/102/Add.1, the Secretary-General informs the General Assembly that he has received notification of the resignation of Mr. William Grant of the United States of America from the membership of the Committee on Contributions, and that the Assembly will therefore be required at its current session to appoint a person to fill the unexpired portion of the term of office of Mr. William Grant, that is, until 31 December 1997.

In order to enable the General Assembly to take the required action, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 18, entitled "Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions".

May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 18, entitled "Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions"?

It was so decided.

The President: Representatives are aware that this sub-item is usually allocated to the Fifth Committee. However, may I take it that the Assembly agrees that, in view of time constraints, the appointment should be made directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: I therefore propose that the General Assembly proceed immediately to the appointment of a member of the Committee on Contributions.

I see no objection. We will proceed accordingly.

Agenda item 18 *(continued)*

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/102/Add.1)

The President: I should like to draw the attention of the Assembly to paragraph 2 of the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/51/102/Add.1. In that paragraph, the General Assembly is informed that the Government of the United States of America has nominated Mr. David Leis to fill the unexpired portion of the term of office of Mr. William Grant, that is, until 31 December 1997.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint Mr. David Leis as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning 27 March 1997 and ending 31 December 1997?

It was so decided.

The President: May I also take it that the Assembly decides to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 18?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 19 *(continued)*

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (Part II) (A/51/588/Add.1)

Letter from Saint Lucia (A/51/799)

The President: I request the Rapporteur of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), Mr. El Walid Doudech of Tunisia, to introduce the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee.

Mr. Doudech (Tunisia), Rapporteur of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: It is an honour to introduce to the General Assembly Part II of the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), document A/51/588/Add.1. This report relates to the following territories: American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St. Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands.

The report recommends the adoption of two draft resolutions. Draft resolution A is of a general nature and makes reference to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), containing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Draft resolution B relates to each of the 11 territories I have just named.

The draft resolution expresses awareness of the special characteristics of these Territories and states that the aspirations of the peoples of the Territories should continue to serve as the basis for the determination of their future political status.

The draft resolution also recognizes that there is no alternative to the principle of self-determination, as expressed by the General Assembly in resolutions 1514 (XV), 1541 (XV) and others.

In the operative part, the draft resolution approves the tenth chapter of the report of the Special Committee and reaffirms the right of the peoples of the Territories to self-determination. It requests the administering Powers to transmit to the Secretary-General information on, *inter alia*, the wishes and aspirations of the peoples of the Territories regarding their future political status.

The draft resolution reaffirms the importance of United Nations visiting missions to the Territories, as well as the responsibility of the administering Powers for promoting the economic and social development and for preserving the cultural identity of the Territories.

The draft resolution stresses that the eradication of colonialism by the year 2000 requires the full and constructive cooperation of all parties concerned.

The draft resolution invites the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to initiate or to continue to take all necessary measures to accelerate progress in the social and economic life of the Territories.

The draft resolution requests the Special Committee to continue the examination of the question of the small Territories and to make recommendations to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

Part B of the draft resolution deals with each Territory and its status independently.

This draft resolution represents great progress in the work of the Special Committee because consensus has been reached with the administering Powers. We hope that this will be a good starting-point for fruitful cooperation with these countries with a view to achieving the goal of complete decolonization by the year 2000.

The Fourth Committee adopted this draft resolution without a vote and recommends to the General Assembly that it do likewise.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership and for your interest in the consultations between the Special Committee and the administering Powers. I would also like to thank the Chairman of the Fourth Committee, Ambassador Kittikhoun of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and the other members of the Bureau for their cooperation and support.

I would especially like to thank the Secretariat of the Fourth Committee for its input — in particular the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Amer Araim — as well as all others concerned for their remarkable work in the field of decolonization.

The President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee which is before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records. May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendation contained in the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take a decision in the same manner as was done in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in paragraph 5 of Part II of its report (A/51/588/Add.1). The draft resolution is entitled "Questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St. Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands".

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/224).

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to make statements in explanation of vote.

Mr. Marrero (United States of America): The United States welcomes the adoption of the resolution, as amended, on the 11 non-self-governing Territories administered by the United States and the United Kingdom. This is a milestone event, one which represents our collective effort to look ahead, to begin disposing of long-standing issues and to spare the Assembly a further, sterile debate.

Over the last few years, we have been forced to challenge the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee on draft resolutions proposed by the Committee of 24 on the Non-Self-Governing Territories administered by the United States and the United Kingdom.

We were encouraged, therefore, when the Fourth Committee Chairman, Ambassador Kittikhoun, took the initiative last fall to bring the parties together for the first time informally to discuss the Committee of 24's draft resolution dealing with the Non-Self-Governing Territories and amendments presented by us and the United Kingdom. We met with the members of the Committee of 24 in October and November. The Committee's willingness to listen and genuine desire for change matched our own.

Responding to this productive mood, and convinced that we could advance the process if we continued, our delegations proposed — and the Fourth Committee agreed — to defer action on the draft resolution and continue the informal dialogue to tackle the more difficult issues still outstanding.

From 17 January to 12 March, we and our British partners participated in nine informal sessions chaired by Ambassador Kittikhoun, including four meetings with the Chairman of the Committee of 24, Ambassador Samana, and five with the entire membership of the Committee. Today's outcome proves that it was time well spent.

Many of the representatives in this Hall were sceptical that we could reach consensus. I cannot deny that the negotiations were difficult because of the substantial differences between us. But we and our Committee of 24 interlocutors were convinced that the continuation of this informal dialogue would facilitate greater understanding. We have accomplished exactly that. In this regard, we are grateful to the General Assembly President, Ambassador Razali, for his support of the process; to Ambassador Kittikhoun, under whose leadership we persevered; to Ambassador Samana, who ably led the C-24 towards consensus; to the rest of the Special Committee for their conscientious hard work; and to the other members of the Secretariat and Bureau.

The adoption of this resolution is a significant achievement in itself, but, more importantly, it is a critical step to the next stage of the informal dialogue. For many years we had expressed dissatisfaction with the Committee of 24's annual reports on the Non-Self-Governing Territories because we believed they were not balanced. They did not adequately recognize the progress achieved in the Territories in question to move them towards acceptable options of self-determination. We are pleased that this resolution for the first time is appropriately balanced, shunning cold-war-style rhetoric and acknowledging international progress towards self-government in the Territories concerned. The resolution also recognizes that self-determination as it has evolved is not a unitary concept satisfied only by full independence, but encompasses a much broader range of acceptable options, as long as they are freely chosen through informed elections by the people affected. We believe that the spirit of cooperation, flexibility and goodwill that prevailed in our work to date will help continue to build trust and lead to closer cooperation. We are ready to continue that work.

The consensus adoption of this resolution also marks an important step towards the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. But we have a long way to go. Fundamental differences still remain between us and the Committee of 24 on the issue of the eradication of colonialism and how it relates to our Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Let me highlight our objectives as we move into the next phase of the dialogue.

Having reached consensus on this text, we are prepared to continue the informal dialogue with a view to possibly achieving resumed formal cooperation.

Having reaffirmed in principle that visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, at an appropriate time and with the agreement of the administering Power, could constitute an effective means of achieving the goals of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism by the year 2000, we are prepared to discuss with the Special Committee the modalities for such missions.

Bearing in mind our differences regarding the Special Committee's regional seminars, and in the light of our discussions with the Committee on modalities for visiting missions, we are prepared to review with the Committee the efficacy of and the need for these seminars.

Finally, we hope to consider appropriate mechanisms by which to give recognition to expressions of self-determination by the peoples of the Territories concerned, based on an informed, free and voluntary choice, with a view to removing those Territories from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

We have embarked on a process in the interest of the United Nations, the Member States and the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In doing so, we have attempted to address your view, Mr. President, that the time has come to end business as usual at the United Nations. We look forward to our continuing dialogue with the members of the Committee of 24 and hope to be able to report further progress to you in the months ahead.

Mr. Mounkhou (Mongolia): The delegation of Mongolia welcomes the consensus adoption of the resolution on Non-Self-Governing Territories. We would like to thank in this connection Ambassador Kittikhoun, Chairman of the Fourth Committee, for his dedication and initiative encouraging greater dialogue and negotiations.

My delegation has been of the view that the aforementioned issues should be resolved through commitment and cooperation between the Committee of 24 and the administering Powers, taking into account the interests of the Territories' peoples as a matter of their main concern.

We hope that the spirit of this achievement will guide the further cooperation between the Special Committee of 24 and the administering Powers in the best interests of the peoples of the Territories.

I should like to take this opportunity to express to Ambassador Kittikhoun my delegation's appreciation for his exemplary leadership of the proceedings of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee.

Mr. Richmond (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom delegation welcomes the adoption of the amended text of the resolution concerning a number of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, including eight which are administered by the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom fully accepts its obligations under the United Nations Charter as an administering Power.

Agreement on a consensus text was reached only after a long and complex negotiation, very ably led by the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee. My delegation pays tribute to his efforts. We

took note of his statement to the Fourth Committee on 14 March and fully endorse his comments about the demonstration by both parties to the negotiations of a flexible and practical approach to the difficult issues which faced us. My delegation believes that the agreement which resulted was a clear vindication of the view that eventually prevailed last December endorsing the continuation of the informal dialogue between the administering Powers concerned and the Special Committee. This consensus proves that dialogue is preferable to the sterile confrontation which has marked this issue for too long.

As a result of the successful conclusion to the dialogue initiated by the Chairman of the Fourth Committee, my delegation is ready to continue informal discussions with the Special Committee. We approach these discussions with an open mind. We look forward to exploring ways in which we can reduce the levels of distrust which unfortunately remain. We believe that with perseverance and goodwill, solutions to the outstanding issues can be found. There is now a much more solid foundation of understanding between the administering Powers and the Special Committee. My delegation believes that we share a common objective; we now have the task of finding agreed methods of achieving that objective.

The resolution just adopted is a good start. It acknowledges that there are particular circumstances prevailing in the territories concerned; it accepts that there have been positive constitutional developments in some Non-Self-Governing Territories; it requests the administering Powers to provide information on democratic processes indicating the wishes and aspirations of the people of the Territories, such as elections, referendums and constitutional developments; it acknowledges that visiting missions can take place at an appropriate time and in consultation with the administering Power; and it accepts that the role of regional seminars needs to be reviewed.

My delegation is ready to discuss these and other issues which are of concern to the Special Committee. We do not expect instant results, but we believe that the sceptics who so nearly prevented continuation of this dialogue will again be proved wrong.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As was announced in a statement by the President of the General Assembly on 13 December 1996, the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the delegations of the administering Powers — the United States and the United Kingdom — agreed to hold consultations under the coordination of the highly effective Chairman of the Fourth Committee, our friend, Ambassador Kittikhoun, regarding the recommendations contained in the chapter on 11 non-self-governing Territories in the Special Committee's report. The administering Powers confirmed that it was not their intention to hinder the continuation of the Decolonization Committee's work regarding the non-self-governing Territories. In accepting the dialogue, the Special Committee expressed the hope that the administering Powers would extend their cooperation to ensure that the Committee could discharge the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

In the course of the negotiations that ran from January to a few days ago, the Decolonization Committee, realistically and without scepticism, proved itself extremely flexible in order to reach an agreement on the set of amendments submitted to the draft resolution on those small Territories. Some delegations, including the Cuban delegation, were also very realistic and made a great effort to be able to join the consensus so that some kind of agreement could be reached, such as the one under consideration today by the General Assembly.

Once again the United Nations must face a great challenge in order to meet the stated objective of eliminating the last vestiges of colonialism by the fast-approaching year 2000. The peoples of the non-self-governing Territories being considered by the Decolonization Committee are still awaiting action on the part of the international community, and the United Nations in particular, in order to realize their aspirations with regard to their future political status.

Once again the administering Powers have said that they stand ready to cooperate with the Decolonization Committee in the accomplishment of its tasks. As indicated in the draft resolution that was recommended by the Fourth Committee for adoption, a United Nations programme should be developed to identify the wishes of the peoples of the non-self-governing Territories regarding their political status by means of visiting missions to the Territories. Great efforts by all parties will be required — by the administering Powers as well as by the Committee — in order to reach our stated goals, and in order to do that we must work with intelligence, skill,, flexibility and, above all, political goodwill.

There can be no doubt that the decolonization process has made considerable headway. However, this

should not lead us to the erroneous and romantic belief that the work of decolonization is over. Let us take but two examples.

Puerto Rico is a territory where the number of military installations and bases are today increasing, in disregard of the will of the people. It is a nation whose language and culture must be defended every day against annexation, discrimination and absorption. Its people has defended its independence through 100 years of colonialism, and the regrettable completion of those 100 years of colonialism should at least serve to mobilize world consciousness so that the Puerto Rican people can freely determine its own destiny.

Ten years ago the people of Guam held a referendum that endorsed a Commonwealth of Guam bill that would establish a new framework for relations between the territory and the United States as administering Power. This would allow the native people of Guam, the Chamorro people, to exercise self-determination and would later allow Guam to move from Commonwealth status to another political status that only its people could decide. But protracted negotiations are still going on in the United States Congress, and hasty opinions are beginning to be heard, to the effect that there could be unconstitutional aspects to the process.

The fact that there are still peoples and Territories that are not independent and that continue to look to the international community and to count on the United Nations for the exercise of their right to self-determination is the best example of the unfinished obligation of the United Nations in this area.

The Cuban delegation, in joining today's consensus on the recommendations of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, reaffirms its steadfast position of continuing to work actively for the total elimination of all forms of colonialism. We trust that the pledge of cooperation made by the administering Powers will become a reality.

Mr. Samana (Papua New Guinea): I wish to express the views of my country on the omnibus resolution pertaining to the questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St. Helena, Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands.

Let me begin by expressing my compliments to the Chairman of the Fourth Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Kittikhoun of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, for his great efforts and the responsible manner in which he presided over the negotiations between the Committee of 24 and the administering Powers — the United Kingdom and the United States — arriving at a consensus on the omnibus resolution relating to the list of non-self-governing Territories, which we have adopted.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the Committee of 24 for their serious and genuine efforts in handling this very sensitive issue. With their wise counsel and cooperation we were able to synthesize the different perspectives into an acceptable formulation leading to a consensus text, thus enabling the General Assembly to take a positive decision.

I also wish to compliment the representatives of the respective administering Powers of the United States and the United Kingdom for their understanding in reaching a consensus on this omnibus resolution.

It has not been easy to arrive at a consensus due to the fact that fundamental differences still exist, and it takes effort and time to resolve them. The text before us may not be satisfactory to all members of the Committee of 24, particularly in relation to some of the critical areas of concern. However, in the spirit of cooperation, we have been able to reach an understanding on the basis that it will provide a framework upon which ongoing dialogue and cooperation between the administering authorities and the Committee of 24 will be assured. This is extremely important if we are to apply ourselves practically to the attainment of the United Nations goals specified for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism by the year 2000.

I wish to place on record that, despite great difficulties, the members of the Committee of 24 have shown flexibility and perceptiveness. They have been cautious but practical in their approach to discussing the amendments proposed by the United Kingdom and the United States. The fundamental concern of the members of the Committee of 24 is to ensure that the situation of the remaining non-self-governing Territories as colonial Territories is not defined in a way that undermines the rights of the peoples to genuinely and freely exercise their political will in determining their external political status. The only way to safeguard the interests of the peoples of the non-self-governing Territories is to ensure transparency in the implementation of the decolonization process, consistent with the legal norms of the United Nations.

We recognize the vulnerabilities of these Territories pertaining to their peculiar socio-economic, geographic and environmental circumstances, especially with reference to the many small island Territories located in the Pacific and Caribbean regions. However, these factors should not serve as an excuse to deny their right to self-determination in accordance with their political aspirations and wishes. We, the Member States of the United Nations, including the respective administering authorities, are obliged to uphold the legal norms of the United Nations to ensure that the rights of peoples are not denied or subdued for any reason. The right to self-determination is recognized by the United Nations as a fundamental right. It is also supported by other legal instruments of the United Nations system, as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, and supported further by the relevant decisions and resolutions of the United Nations.

Having reached consensus on the omnibus resolution, the members of the Committee of 24 look forward to full and constructive cooperation from the respective administering authorities and to addressing the most sensitive and critical issues that are still outstanding in order to establish a practical and logical approach to implementing the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism within the given time-frame.

The members of the Committee of 24 have always called for an innovative, imaginative and practical approach to handling the question of the decolonization of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories in the manner most appropriate to the particular socio-economic and environmental circumstances of the Territories and peoples concerned. This cannot be achieved without the full and constructive cooperation of all the parties concerned. We wish to emphasize in particular the importance of the cooperation of the administering Powers.

The members of the Committee of 24 fully understand that it is not our duty to prescribe a particular political status for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. It is entirely up to the peoples of the Territories themselves to decide which political status options they wish to adopt in accordance with the legal norms of the United Nations. In this connection, the members of the Committee of 24 would like to focus on the constitutional developments in each of these Territories, because these will give a clear indication of how the peoples of the Territories concerned are moving progressively forward to a stage where they will be able to exercise their right to self-determination freely and genuinely, without interference and within a constitutional framework that meets their political aspirations and wishes.

We should also take advantage of all the goodwill that has been established so far and, in the spirit of cooperation and dialogue, focus on the constitutional developments in each of these Territories. This will enable the United Nations, working through its agencies and in cooperation with the administering Powers, to move practically towards the implementation of the decolonization process.

We are extremely pleased to indicate that the consensus we have reached on the omnibus resolution (51/224) provides an atmosphere of trust and confidence in which we can move forward to deal with the outstanding issues relating specifically to a methodology and approaches to the decolonization process that would genuinely promote the rights of peoples to determine their external political status.

We look forward to the understanding and positive cooperation of the Administering Authorities in allowing United Nations missions to visit some of their Territories in response to the specific calls of the elected leaders and representatives of the Territories concerned. This should allow the United Nations effectively to monitor and assess developments in those Territories. We have noted, however, that certain Administering Authorities have not guaranteed that they will formally cooperate with the Committee of 24. We are gravely concerned that failure to assist the elected representatives of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories fully to participate in the formal meetings of the Committee of 24 and to attend the Pacific and Caribbean regional seminars — especially in the absence of visiting missions — might make it difficult for the United Nations, working through the Committee of 24, fully to ascertain the political and constitutional status of developments in those Territories.

The Administering Authorities concerned should note that the issue of ascertaining the wishes of the peoples in relation to their political status options can be resolved only through formal recognition by the United Nations. The Administering Authorities cannot assume or allege that colonial situations have ended. Colonial situations can end only when and if the peoples of the Territories decide on their external political status on the basis of an acceptable legal standard, with the involvement of the United Nations. The element of international recognition is critical in this sense. That is why the process of ascertaining the wishes of the peoples in determining their external political status must be properly understood and accepted by the Members of the United Nations as a whole.

Finally, the members of the Committee of 24 have always called for such cooperation, and we are satisfied that the consensus on the omnibus resolution can pave the way towards greater cooperation, especially in the areas that I have outlined, to enable the United Nations to achieve its goal of eradicating colonialism in a practical and responsible manner, in the interests of the peoples of the Territories concerned.

Mr. Young (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 13 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations. CARICOM is pleased to support the omnibus resolution (51/224) concerning the political, constitutional and socio-economic development of the remaining small island Non-Self-Governing Territories, following several months of intensive consultations between the members of the Committee of 24 and the administering Powers. We wish to congratulate all parties connected with these consultations which resulted in the adoption of the resolution without a vote in the Fourth Committee on Friday, 14 March.

We regard these developments as having particular significance, since seven of the Territories referred to in the resolution are within the Caribbean region and are integral parts of many of our regional and subregional groupings, including the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States as well as the wider Caribbean Community. In fact, several of these Non-Self-Governing Territories are members of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and, as such, share the Eastern Caribbean currency with other States of our region. The strength of these economic linkages is surpassed only by the deep family ties that exist between our islands, irrespective of the level of political and constitutional development of any particular Territory. In short, the advancement of the Caribbean Non-Self-Governing Territories is important to the advancement of our wider Caribbean. Accordingly, our CARICOM Governments place paramount importance on an effective and sustained review process by the General Assembly and by the Economic and Social Council in respect of the relevant agenda item on assistance to the Territories by specialized agencies and other international institutions associated with the United Nations.

CARICOM also attaches the greatest importance to the recommendation made by the Economic and Social Council, at the 51st meeting of its 1996 substantive session, held on 26 July 1996, by which it requested the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system and international and regional organizations to strengthen their assistance to the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

In this connection, a few comments on some of the key principles contained in the omnibus resolution are useful.

We strongly believe that, as agreed during the intensive negotiations leading to the adoption of the omnibus resolution, it is ultimately for the peoples of the Territories to determine their future political status in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. We recognize the need for programmes to educate the peoples of the Territories on their rights to self-determination in conformity with legitimate political status opinions and options, including those defined in resolution 1541 (XV).

The omnibus resolution makes reference to the goals of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, whose Plan of Action, adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 1991, contains specific provisions for the establishment of important regional seminars. The Committee of 24 subsequently held four such seminars in the Caribbean and Pacific from 1992 through 1996 — specifically in Grenada in 1992, in Papua New Guinea in 1993, in Trinidad and Tobago in 1995 and again in Papua New Guinea in 1996. These seminars represented one of the few opportunities available to the United Nations to hear first-hand the concerns of the very people whose advancement we seek to foster.

In this regard, the cooperation of the administering Powers in facilitating the participation of representatives of elected Governments of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean region in particular will facilitate the work of the Committee in reviewing the role of these seminars for ascertaining the future political status of these Territories.

Because of the importance that our Governments place on hearing from the representatives of the peoples themselves, including their democratically elected Governments as well as non-governmental organizations, we are pleased that Antigua and Barbuda has offered to host the 1997 seminar this May. We are pleased also to inform the Assembly that that Government intends to seek membership on the Committee of 24 this year.

Further, CARICOM Governments are of the view that other elements of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism should be addressed from a regional perspective as well, in particular the review of the impact of the economic and social situation on the constitutional and political advancement of Non-Self-Governing Territories — an activity called for in the Plan of Action but never carried out. We believe that this area of activity needs to be addressed in the context of the 1997 seminar.

CARICOM countries welcome the agreement for the commencement of visiting missions, where appropriate, and look forward to the formulation of a programme in the near future for visits to some of the Territories in the Caribbean whose elected representatives have indicated that they would like such missions to take place.

The United Nations has reached a point that is critical to the history of the decolonization process and to the manner in which it will address the issue in the future.

The international community is to be commended for its sustained effort in helping to secure the self-determination of the people of Namibia and in assisting with the defeat of apartheid. This same level of commitment must be devoted to the constitutional and socio-economic development of our remaining small island Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean and Pacific as well.

The small size of these Territories does not mean that their decolonization is any less important, and the attention we have given to the fulfilment of their right to self-determination cannot — and should not — be of a lesser priority than that which we have devoted to those that have successfully completed the journey to full self-government and dignity.

Mr. Santaputra (Thailand): My delegation would like to commend and congratulate both the administering Powers and the members of the Committee of 24 for their dedication during the meaningful informal consultations to consider this delicate issue. The consultations offered an important and practical opportunity for members to address differences and to work together in a spirit of cooperation and compromise, the result of which is the resolution we have adopted today.

Thailand is of the view that the adoption of this omnibus resolution by consensus represents a very positive development — a good start to lead us into the next millennium with purpose.

Finally, Sir, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Ambassador Alounkèo Kittikhoun of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, our good neighbour, for his initiative, his unremitting efforts and his successful chairmanship of the Fourth Committee under your able presidency.

The President: In connection with the resolution just adopted by the General Assembly under agenda item 19, I should like to express my thanks to His Excellency Mr. Alounkèo Kittikhoun of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, for his arduous efforts and for his leadership in conducting the difficult consultations on the resolution with the other members of the Special Committee of 24 and the administering Powers concerned that brought about a successful outcome.

I should now like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/51/799, which contains a letter dated 24 January 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of Saint Lucia to the United Nations addressed to me.

By his letter, the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Saint Lucia to the United Nations informs me of the desire of the Government of Saint Lucia to become a member of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

As delegations are aware, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1654 (XVI) of 27 November 1961, members of the Special Committee are nominated by the President of the General Assembly.

After consultations with regional groups, I have nominated Saint Lucia as a member of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of this nomination?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 19.

Agenda item 40 *(continued)*

The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/828)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.69)

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/51/842)

The President: I call on the representative of Mexico to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.69.

Mr. Albin (Mexico): It is an honour for me to introduce this draft resolution on behalf of the countries that are members of the Group of Friends of the Guatemala peace process, the names of which appear in the text, and of the following sponsors: Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Nicaragua, Netherlands, Panama, Portugal, Russian Federation, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

At the outset, the sponsors would like once again to express their satisfaction at the signing on 29 December last by the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace.

As can be noted, the preambular part of the draft resolution refers, *inter alia*, to various General Assembly resolutions adopted during the course of the peace process. Reference is also made to the signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace and, in a general manner, to the other 12 agreements signed by the parties.

The draft also notes that the General Assembly is encouraged by the progress made in the process of the verification of the ceasefire, the separation of forces and disarmament and demobilization, as authorized by Security Council resolution 1094 (1997).

The preambular part also recalls the request of the parties that the United Nations verify the agreements and the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the restructuring and extension of the mandate of the Verification Mission in Guatemala.

In its operative part, the draft resolution welcomes the report of the Secretary-General; takes note with satisfaction of the sixth report of the Director of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGA); commends the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) for their efforts in search of peace; and calls upon both parties to continue fully to comply with the commitments entered into the agreements.

The draft authorizes the renewal of the mandate of MINUGUA, to be known henceforth as the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, for a year, in accordance with the recommendations of the Secretary-General. It requests the Secretary-General to continue to develop appropriate means to obtain resources for the Mission within the limits of the approved budget for the current biennium.

The draft also requests the Secretary-General to submit a report and recommendations on the structure and staffing of the Mission after 31 March 1998. In this respect, I should like to draw attention to the fact that in his report, the Secretary-General includes an estimate of the costs of the Mission for the biennium 1998-1999.

Finally, the draft invites the international community to support the peace process by making contributions, either to the Trust Fund or by other means.

The Government of Guatemala, the URNG and the United Nations have again demonstrated to the world the effectiveness of dialogue and negotiation as the best means of resolving differences. The foundation has been laid for a new stage in the history of Guatemala, characterized by harmony, understanding and new frameworks for institutional, economic and social development. The sponsors trust that the international community will continue generously to support this process, both politically and economically.

Accordingly, we call upon the General Assembly to adopt unanimously the draft resolution before it today, contained in document A/51/L.69.

Mr. Berteling (Netherlands): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union to address draft resolution A/51/L.69 on the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). The following associated countries have aligned themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Iceland has also aligned itself with it.

The European Union has consistently and actively supported the peace process in Guatemala. We welcomed in particular the signing at the end of last year of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace. The European Union also supported the attachment to MINUGUA of 155 military observers to verify the Agreement on a Definitive Ceasefire. We welcome the fact that the verification of the ceasefire began on 3 March 1997, and encourage the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) to continue to cooperate fully with MINUGUA and to fulfil in good faith the commitments they have entered into.

The European Union supports the view that continued international verification is needed for the consolidation of peace and democracy in Guatemala. At the same time, we wish to stress again that the parties themselves have the sole and primary responsibility for the successful implementation of the peace process and the consolidation of a democratic society, based on the rule of law and open to the participation of its citizens, in particular the indigenous population. Further internal consensus-building and constant dialogue between all social, economic and political actors will be of critical importance.

We welcome the efforts by the Government of President Arzú to protect and promote human rights, and call upon both parties to honour all their commitments resulting from the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights. We trust that the policy for the compensation of victims of human rights violations connected with the conflict, foreseen in the Agreement on Human Rights, will be settled by 15 April 1997, as stated in the Agreement for the full implementation of the peace accords of 29 December 1996.

The European Union strongly supports the outcome of the Consultative Group Meeting on Guatemala, which concluded with the international donor community pledging aid totalling some $1.9 billion for project-related activities for the period 1997-2000. Primary importance will be attached to the consolidation of the democratization process and economic and social development for all, as well as better access for and participation by the indigenous population. We are aware of the importance of economic development for the success of the democratization process. The estimated European Union contribution to the peace process in Guatemala for the period 1997-2000 is $250 million.

We welcome the appointment of Mr. Jean Arnault as Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Mission in Guatemala, with the important task of monitoring and verifying the implementation of the peace agreements.

The European Union is strongly in favour of the renewal of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). In our view, the continuation of the work of this Mission, the name of which will be changed to United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala as of 1 April 1997, is of major importance for the full implementation of the peace accords. The five separate verification tasks identified by the Secretary-General in his last report cover the key areas that require attention.

The fact that all the States members of the European Union have sponsored the draft resolution before us illustrates our common trust and hope that a stable and democratic society can be built in Guatemala. We hope the draft resolution can be adopted today by consensus, in order to underline the continued interest and commitment of the international community with regard to the peace process in Guatemala. We urge the parties to do their utmost to use the momentum for the creation of a peaceful and democratic society in order to fulfil the justified expectations of all the citizens of Guatemala.

Mr. Westendorp (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The representative of the Netherlands has just spoken on behalf of the European Union, and my delegation aligns itself fully with his statement. However, I should like to make a few additional comments in view of the steadfast commitment to the Guatemalan peace process that my country shares with the other members of the Group of Friends — a commitment that stands undiminished — and because of our considerable contribution to the United Nations presence in Guatemala.

Draft resolution A/51/L.69, which is before the Assembly for adoption today — by consensus, we trust — will extend by one year, until 31 March 1998, the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA), renaming it the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala. The aim is to carry out the international verification called for in the peace accords.

In taking this decision, the General Assembly will authorize the United Nations to undertake the important task of verifying all the peace agreements between the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG). With the exception of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights, which came into effect when signed in March 1994, these agreements entered into force formally and completely at the moment of the signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace in Guatemala on 29 December 1996. In this way, the international community will be renewing its active interest in and steadfast commitment to the Guatemalan people, in order to ensure that the efforts of the parties to achieve a firm and lasting peace and to consolidate democracy and a state of law will once and for all take root in that Central American country.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General of 14 March 1997, detailing the revised structure and staffing of MINUGUA, which will make it a versatile tool for the complex verification of the various peace accords. The fact that this restructuring of the Mission can be achieved without any great changes in the field or other substantial alterations demonstrates the importance of the work that it has been doing for years in Guatemala, as well as the excellence of its staff. We are certain that the new Head of MINUGUA, Jean Arnault, will make full use of this tool for verification, good offices and advisory and public-information services. He will always be able to count on the support of Spain in those tasks and on our significant presence in the Mission.

Spain is proud to play an active role in the hopeful new phase in Guatemala's history. A Spanish General commands the MINUGUA military contingent of 155 military observers and medical personnel authorized by Security Council resolution 1094 (1997) to verify the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace. My country is the largest contributor of personnel to that group. We are pleased that the process of verifying the ceasefire, the separation of forces, and the disarming and demobilization of Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) combatants is being carried out in a very positive way and with the full cooperation of the parties. This augurs well for the peace-building in Guatemala.

Madrid was the site of the signing on 12 December 1996, of one of the most important agreements between the parties: the Agreement on the Basis for the Legal Integration of URNG. On that occasion, my Government also sponsored a seminar on reintegration and demobilization in Guatemala. We believe that this crucial aspect of the peace agreements demands the particular attention of the international community, as national reconciliation can take shape only in a climate of solidarity, harmony and development. As the President of the Spanish Government, José María Aznar, stated on the occasion of the signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace in Guatemala City on 29 December 1996,

> "Peace is a daily chore that requires many sacrifices. It is the desire to banish the yesterday's hatreds, to understand our opponents' position and to seek the roots of a common future."

We firmly believe that the maturity of the Guatemalan people, which has been evident throughout the peace process, will enable that country to build a common future of liberty and democracy. More than ever, Spain will be at Guatemala's side during this new phase of its history. Spain will both increase significantly its bilateral cooperation and join the efforts of the international community.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): The Government of Guatemala under President Alvaro Arzú and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) have made impressive progress in implementing the Comprehensive Agreement that is transforming their society. It is fitting that we have come here today to renew the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). Over the course of the next year, MINUGUA will help the Government and the people of Guatemala realize the promise of the agreements that have been signed.

The six substantive and four operational accords that MINUGUA will monitor are the road map for economic, social and political reform in Guatemala. Successful implementation will result in improved respect for human rights and the rule of law, a more open economy, greater integration of the country's majority indigenous

population into national life, and improved living standards for the 80 per cent of the population who live in poverty.

The United States, as a strong supporter of the peace process and a member of the Group of Friends, is certain that MINUGUA is working in the best traditions of the United Nations. For that reason, the United States is proud to co-sponsor this draft resolution. Already, MINUGUA has strengthened civic and governmental institutions which deal with human rights and has provided accurate and unbiased reporting on human rights issues. MINUGUA's presence throughout Guatemala provides needed assistance to victims of abuse. By helping strengthen respect for human rights and end impunity for human rights abusers, MINUGUA is helping eliminate the climate of fear and insecurity which prevailed in Guatemala throughout the 36-year-long civil war.

The United States is confident that Jean Arnault, who moderated intense negotiations between the Government of Guatemala and the URNG for the last three years, will lead MINUGUA successfully in this new era. The new, restructured MINUGUA will oversee an unprecedented transformation in the political, legislative, social, economic, agrarian, ethnic, military and public-security life of Guatemala. Many changes, once unthinkable, are already taking place.

Civil-action patrols have been disbanded, and military personnel charged with common crimes will now be tried in civilian courts. URNG leaders have returned to Guatemala to fight for their beliefs, not with bullets, but with ballots. Thousands of URNG guerrillas have taken their first steps on the road to reintegration and turned in their weapons to the military observer contingent attached to MINUGUA. It is vital that this essential element be complied with fully. In April, the Historical Clarification Commission, established as part of the peace accords, will begin its investigation of abuses committed by both sides during the 36-year war.

While much progress has been made, the reconstruction of Guatemala's infrastructure and reconciliation in Guatemalan society will take much more work, time and international support. With the adoption of the draft resolution before us, the members of this body will be giving the Guatemalan people the support they need to build a bright future based on the principles of justice and democracy.

(spoke in Spanish)

I congratulate all of the Guatemalans who are responsible for this success in peace and reconciliation.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): I am pleased to be able to speak on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) and the new, expanded role it is being given in the implementation phase of the Guatemala peace accords. I hope that the draft resolution before us today will be adopted by consensus.

I would like to say first and foremost that Canada appreciates the tremendous efforts of the Guatemalan people and Government to end decades of bitter conflict. The negotiation of the complex package of peace agreements, the last of which was signed on 29 December 1996, justly deserves high praise for the courage and determination shown by all of the parties involved.

With the challenge of negotiating these peace accords behind them, however, we share the Secretary-General's observation that

> "The Guatemalan peace process has entered a new and challenging phase." *(A/51/828, para. 28)*

The diligent implementation of these accords will give the people of Guatemala the opportunity to finally experience the prosperity, development and stability that is their due after so many years of fear and upheaval.

(spoke in English)

Various organs of the United Nations, notably the General Assembly, the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have played a significant role throughout the Guatemalan peace process. More recently, my delegation welcomed the authorization by the Security Council of a military observer component for the existing MINUGUA Mission. This was a necessary component of the peace accords themselves, and we believe that the smooth initial functioning of this Mission demonstrates the benefits of close cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council. As post-conflict reconstruction becomes an increasingly important facet of the United Nations work around the world, we hope that the model provided by MINUGUA will serve as a precedent for further examples of

cooperation between the operations authorized by both the Assembly and the Council.

We were also pleased to note that the most recent report of the Secretary-General recommended a continuing and expanded role for MINUGUA, under the name United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, in the implementation of all the peace accords. Not only will the reorientation of the Mission's mandate make it the guarantor of the full implementation phase of the peace process, but it will have been achieved with a negligible increase in the resources required. The renewal period of a full year is also noteworthy, as it recognizes that a society's reconstruction cannot be accomplished overnight; it requires stability and commitment over time.

Mr. Baumanis (Latvia), Vice President, took the Chair.

While there is still much work to be done to consolidate the new-found peace and stability in Guatemala, we believe that the Secretary-General's recommendations for the renewal of MINUGUA constitute a solid base on which the United Nations can help contribute to a renewed sense of public confidence in Guatemala's future.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.69, entitled "United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala".

The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/51/L.69 is contained in document A/51/842.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.69?

Draft resolution A/51/L.69 was adopted (resolution 51/198 B).

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Martini Herrera (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Government of Guatemala is deeply satisfied by this extension and expansion of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA), which, in accordance with the Secretary-General's recommendations, will be extended for an additional period of one year, until 31 March 1998.

The signature in Guatemala City on 29 December 1996 of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace is the successful culmination of years of patient negotiation and makes official the definitive conclusion of the domestic armed conflict that beset the Guatemalan nation for 36 years. This event clearly marks the beginning of a new era for my country and is the culmination of the peace process in Central America.

The signature of this most recent Agreement makes effective all the previous agreements signed by the parties, which cover complex political, legislative, social, economic, agrarian, ethnic, military and public-security questions.

The MINUGUA mandate, initially limited to human rights aspects, has just been expanded by consensus adoption, making it fully operational and able to address the fulfilment of the important agreements signed: the Framework Agreement on the Resumption of the Negotiating Process, the Agreement on a Timetable for the Negotiation of a Firm and Lasting Peace, the Agreement on Resettlement of Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict, the Agreement on the Establishment of a Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations and Acts of Violence that have Caused the Guatemalan Population to Suffer, the Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation, the Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and on the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society, the Agreement on a Definitive Ceasefire, the Agreement on Constitutional Reforms and the Electoral Regime, the Agreement on the Basis for the Legal Integration of URNG and the Agreement on the Implementation, Compliance and Verification Timetable for the Peace Agreement.

The Government of Guatemala wishes again to express its profound gratitude to Colombia, Mexico, Norway, Spain, the United States of America and Venezuela for initially submitting this draft resolution, as well as to the other countries that sponsored it, and for the statements made today. We also wish to thank the Secretary-General, his representatives and other personnel who, in various capacities, are now contributing more than ever to the success of this process through the brilliantly restructured Mission.

Following the signature of the peace Agreement, we must now enter the phase of implementing and fulfilling the commitments undertaken. This calls for an tremendous effort for internal and external investment. The international community's generous backing is a clear indication of genuine support for this process that will make it possible to consolidate the peace that Guatemalans so desire to achieve a truly firm and lasting peace, as we have repeatedly called for in this Hall.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 40.

Agenda item 135 *(continued)*

Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part II) (A/51/504/Add.1)

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Fifth Committee which is before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendation of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendation contained in the report of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take a decision in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of part II of its report (A/51/504/Add.1).

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote.

May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/3 B).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 135.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.